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The Centenary Edition.

THE COMPLETE WORKS

OF

SAINT ALPHONSUS DE LIGUORI,

DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH,

Bishop of Saint Agatha, and Founder of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

TRANSLATED FROM THE ITALIAN.

EDITED BY

REV. EUGENE GRIMM,

Priest of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

THE ASCETICAL WORKS.

Volume II.

THE WAY OF SALVATION AND OF PERFECTION.

(MEDITATIONS. PIOUS REFLECTIONS. SPIRITUAL TREATISES.)

Centenary Edition.

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OF
ST. ALPHONSUS DE LIGUORI.

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THE WAY OF SALVATION

AND

OF PERFECTION.

MEDITATIONS—PIOUS REFLECTIONS—
SPIRITUAL TREATISES.

BY

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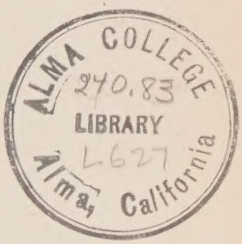
SECOND EDITION.



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APPROBATION.

By virtue of the authority granted me by the Most Rev. Nicholas Mauron, Superior General of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, I hereby sanction the publication of the work entitled "Way of Salvation and of Perfection," which is Vol. II. of the new and complete edition in English of the works of Saint Alphonsus de Liguori, called "The Centenary Edition."

ELIAS FRED. SCHAUER,
Sup. Prov. Baltimorensis.

BALTIMORE, MD., *January* 20, 1886.

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NOTICE.

THIS volume contains the quintessence of the science of the saints. It gives a correct idea of the spirit, of the heart, and of the talent of Saint Alphonsus: one might say that in it his whole soul is poured out.

The entire work is divided into three parts. In the first, we resume, under another form, the considerations on the eternal truths or the Last Things, treated at greater length in the preceding volume. The second part traces and paves the way that leads to divine love, or to sanctity and true happiness, and inspires us at the same time with the desire, the zeal, and the courage to undertake everything to reach this end. The third part transports us to the summit of the holy mountain, or Christian perfection, shows us in detail the mysteries of the interior life, and enables us to breathe its sweetest perfume.

Some persons have objected that the writings of Saint Alphonsus contain many repetitions. This is true in regard to the ascetical works; but these repetitions are not useless. There is no question here of a study, a scientific work done for the sole purpose of exercising the mind. It is a food destined to give strength to the life of the soul. Each one takes for himself every day the amount that agrees with his spiritual temperament. But let us hear what the author himself says in regard to this matter: "I entreat my readers not to grow weary if in those prayers they always find petitions for the grace of perseverance and the grace of divine love. For

us, these are the two graces most necessary for the attainment of eternal salvation."[1] He also says: "One should not find it tiresome that I repeat the texts that I have already cited several times. . . . The authors of pernicious books, who treat of obscene things, reproduce even to satiety their impure sallies in order to inflame their imprudent readers with the fire of concupiscence; and should it not be permitted to me to repeat sacred texts that are most suitable to inflame souls with divine love?"[2] Ah, let us never grow tired of reading and meditating on what the holy bishop has had the patience to write so many times for our benefit.—ED.

[1] Preparation for Death. Preface.
[2] Consid. on the Passion, ch. 8.

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THE

WAY OF SALVATION AND OF PERFECTION.

PART I.

Meditations Suitable for all Times in the Year.*

MEDITATION I.

Eternal Salvation.

1. Our most important affair is that of our eternal salvation; upon it depends our happiness or misery forever. This affair will come to an end in eternity, and will decide whether we shall be saved or lost forever; whether we shall have acquired an eternity of delights, or an eternity of torments; whether we shall live forever happy, or forever miserable.

O God! what will my lot be? Shall I be saved, or shall I be lost? I may be either. And if I may be lost, why do I not embrace such a life, as may secure for me life eternal? O Jesus! Thou didst die to save me; yet have I been lost, as often as I have lost Thee, my sovereign good: suffer me not to lose Thee any more.

* These meditations were published by Saint Alphonsus in 1767. For a method of making meditation, see Compendium of Rules for a Christian Life, at the end of the volume.—Ed.

2. Men esteem it a great affair to gain a lawsuit, to obtain a post of honor, or to acquire an estate. Nothing, however, that will end with time deserves to be esteemed great. Since, therefore, all the goods of this world will one day end in our regard, as we shall either leave them or they will leave us, that affair alone should be esteemed great, upon which depends eternal happiness or eternal misery.

O Jesus, my Redeemer, cast me not away from Thy face, as I have deserved! I am indeed a sinner; but I am grieved from the bottom of my heart for having offended Thy infinite goodness. Hitherto I have despised Thee, but now I love Thee above all things. Henceforth Thou alone shalt be my only good, my only love. Have pity on a sinner who penitently casts himself at Thy feet, and desires to love Thee. If I have grievously offended Thee, I now ardently desire to love Thee. What would have become of me, if Thou hadst called me out of life when I had lost Thy grace and favor? Since Thou, O Lord! hast shown so much mercy to me, grant me grace to become a saint.

3. Let us awaken our faith in a heaven and a hell of eternal duration: one or other will be our lot.

O God! how could I, knowing that by committing sin I was condemning myself to eternal torments—how could I sin so often against Thee and forfeit Thy grace? Knowing that Thou art my God and my Redeemer, how could I, for the sake of a miserable gratification, so often turn my back upon Thee? O God, I am sorry above every evil for having thus despised Thee. I love Thee above every good, and henceforth I will suffer the loss of all things rather than lose Thy friendship. Give me strength to continue faithful. And do Thou, O Blessed Virgin Mary! pray for me and assist me.

MEDITATION II.

Sin as it Dishonors God.

1. *By transgression of the law thou dishonorest God.*[1] When the sinner deliberates whether he shall give or refuse his consent to sin, he takes the balance into his hands to decide which is of most value—the favor of God, some passion, some worldly interest or pleasure. When he yields to temptation, what does he do? He decides that some wretched gratification is more desirable than the favor of God. Thus it is that he dishonors God, declaring, by his consent, that a miserable pleasure is preferable to the divine friendship.

Thus, then, O God! have I so many times dishonored Thee, by esteeming Thee less than my miserable passions.

2. Of this the Almighty complains by the prophet Ezekiel, when he says: *They violated Me among My people, for a handful of barley and a piece of bread.*[2] If the sinner should exchange God for a treasure of jewels, or for a kingdom, it would indeed be doing a great evil, because God is of infinitely more value than all the treasures and kingdoms of the earth. But for what do so many exchange him? for a vapor, for a little dirt, for a poisoned pleasure, which is no sooner tasted than it vanishes.

O God! how could I have had the heart for such vile things, so often to despise Thee, who hast shown so much love for me? But behold, my Redeemer, how I now love Thee above all things; and because I love Thee, I feel more regret for having lost Thee, my God, than if I had lost all other goods, and even my life. Have pity on me, and forgive me. I will never more incur Thy

[1] "Per prævaricationem legis, Deum inhonoras."—*Rom.* ii. 23.

[2] "Violabant me . . . propter pugillum hordei et fragmen panis."—*Ezek.* xiii. 19.

displeasure. Grant that I may rather die than offend Thee any more.

3. *Lord, who is like to Thee?*[1] And what good things, O God! can be comparable to Thee, O infinite goodness? But how could I have turned my back upon Thee, to give myself to those vile things which sin held out to me? O Jesus, Thy precious blood is my hope. Thou hast promised to hear him who prays to Thee. I ask Thee not for the goods of this world: I ask Thee for the pardon of those sins which I have committed against Thee, and for which I am sorry above every other evil. I ask Thee for perseverance in Thy grace until the end of my life. I ask Thee for the gift of Thy holy love; my soul is enamoured of Thy goodness; hear me, O Lord! Only grant that I may love Thee both here and hereafter, and to all things else do with me as Thou pleasest. My Lord, and my only good, suffer me not to be any more separated from Thee! Mary, Mother of God, do thou also listen to me, and obtain for me that I may ever belong to God, and that God may be my inheritance forever.

MEDITATION III.

The Patience of God in waiting for Sinners.

1. Who in this world has so much patience with his equals as God with us his creatures, in bearing with us, and waiting for our repentance, after the many offences we have committed against him?

Ah! my God, had I thus offended my brother or my father, long ago would he have driven me from his face! O Father of mercies, cast me not away from Thy face,[2] but have pity on me.

2. *Thou hast mercy*, says the wise man, *upon all, because Thou canst do all things, and overlookest the sins of men for the*

[1] "Domine, quis similis tibi?"—*Ps.* xxxiv. 10.

[2] "Ne projicias me a facie tua." *Ps.* l. 13.

sake of repentance.[1] Men conceal their sense of the injuries which they receive, either because they are good, and know that it belongs not to themselves to punish those who offend them; or because they are unable, and have not the power to revenge themselves. But to Thee, my God, it does belong to take revenge of the offences which are committed against Thy infinite majesty; and thou indeed art able to avenge Thyself, whenever Thou pleaseth; and dost Thou dissemble? Men despise Thee; they make promises to Thee and afterwards betray Thee; and dost Thou seem not to behold them, or as if Thou hadst little concern for Thy honor?

Thus, O Jesus, hast Thou done towards me. Ah! my God, my infinite good, I will no longer despise Thee, I will no longer provoke Thee to chastise me. And why should I delay until Thou abandonest me in reality and condemnest me to hell? I am truly sorry for all my offences against Thee. I would that I had died rather than offend Thee! Thou art my Lord, Thou hast created me, and Thou hast redeemed me by Thy death; Thou alone hast loved, Thou alone deservest to be loved, and Thou alone shalt be the sole object of my love.

3. My soul, how could you be so ungrateful and so daring against your God? When you offended him, could he not have suddenly called you out of life and punished you with hell? And yet he waited for you; instead of chastising you, he preserved your life and gave you good things. But you, instead of being grateful to him and loving him for such excessive goodness, you continued to offend him!

O my Lord, since Thou hast waited for me with so great mercy, I give Thee thanks. I am sorry for having offended Thee. I love Thee. I might at this hour have dwelt in hell, where I could not have repented, nor have

[1] "Misereris omnium, quia omnia potes; et dissimulas peccata hominum propter pœnitentiam."—*Wis.* xi. 24.

loved Thee. But now that I can repent, I grieve with my whole heart for having offended Thy infinite goodness; and I love Thee above all things, more than I love myself. Forgive me, and grant that from this day I may love no other but Thee, who hast so loved me. May I live for Thee alone, my Redeemer, who for me didst die upon the cross! All my hopes are in Thy bitter Passion. O Mary, Mother of God! assist me by thy holy intercession.

MEDITATION IV.

The Certainty of Death.

1. *We must die!* how awful is the decree! *we must die.* The sentence is passed: *It is appointed for all men once to die.*[1] Thou art a man and thou must die. St. Cyprian says that we are born with a rope around our necks, and as long as we live on earth we hourly approach the gallows, that is, the sickness that puts an end to our life. It would be madness for any one to delude himself with the idea that he shall not die. A poor man may flatter himself that he may become rich, or a vassal that he may be a king; but who can ever hope to escape death? One dies old, another young, but all at last must come to the grave.

I therefore must one day die and enter eternity. But what will be my lot for eternity? happy or miserable? My Saviour Jesus, be Thou a Saviour to me!

2. Of all those who were living upon the earth at the beginning of the last century, not one is now alive. The greatest and most renowned princes of this world have exchanged their country; scarcely does there remain any remembrance of them, and their bare bones are hardly preserved in stone monuments.

Make me, O God! more and more sensible of the folly

[1] "Statutum est hominibus semel mori."—*Heb.* ix. 27.

of loving the goods of this world, and for the sake of them renouncing Thee, my sovereign and infinite good. What folly have I not been guilty of; and how much it grieves me! I give Thee thanks for having made me sensible of it.

3. A hundred years hence, at most, and neither you nor I will be any longer in this world; both will have gone into the house of eternity. A day, an hour, a moment, is approaching which will be the last both for you and me; and this hour, this moment, is already fixed by Almighty God; how then can we think of anything else but of loving God, who will then be our judge?

Alas! what will my death be? O my Jesus and my judge! what will become of me when I shall have to appear before Thee to give an account of my whole life? Pardon me, I beseech Thee, before that moment arrives which will decide my happiness or misery for eternity. I am sorry for having offended Thee, my sovereign good. Hitherto I have not loved Thee; but now I will love Thee with my whole soul. Grant me the grace of perseverance. O Mary, refuge of sinners, have pity on me!

MEDITATION V.

The Loss of all Things in Death.

1. *The day of destruction is at hand.*[1] The day of death is called the day of destruction, because then is destroyed all that man has acquired; honors, friends, riches, possessions, kingdoms—all are then no more. What then doth it profit us to gain the whole world if in death we must leave all? All is at an end at the bedside of the dying man. Is there any king, think you,—said St. Ignatius to Xavier when he sought to bring him to God,—who has taken with him into the other world even a thread of purple to mark his sovereignty? Has any rich

[1] "Juxta est dies perditionis."—*Deut.* xxxii. 35.

man taken with him a single coin, or even one servant to attend him? In death all is left behind. The soul enters eternity alone and unattended, except by its works.

Woe to me! where are my works to accompany me to a blessed eternity? I can discover none but such as render me deserving of eternal torments.

2. Men come into the world in unequal conditions: one is born rich, another poor, one a noble, another a plebeian; but all go out of it equal and alike. Consider the graves of the dead: see if you can discover among the bodies which are there interred, who was a master and who a servant, who was a king and who a beggar.

O God! while others amass the fortunes of this world, may my only fortune be Thy holy grace. Thou alone art my only good both in this life and in the next.

3. In one word, everything on earth will come to an end. All greatness will end, all misery will end, honors will end, ignominies will end; pleasures will end, sufferings will end. Blessed in death, therefore, not he who has abounded in riches, honors, and pleasures, but he who has patiently endured poverty, contempt, and sufferings! The possession of temporal goods affords no consolation at the moment of death: that alone consoles us which has been done or suffered for God.

O Jesus! separate my heart from this world, before death entirely takes me from it. Help me with Thy grace; Thou indeed knowest how great is my weakness. Permit me not to be any more unfaithful to Thee, as I have hitherto been. I am sorry, O Lord! for having so often despised Thee. Now will I love Thee above every good, and will die a thousand times rather than forfeit Thy grace. But the infernal one ceases not to tempt me; in mercy abandon me not, leave me not to myself, permit me not to be any more separated from Thy love. O Mary, my hope! obtain for me the grace of perseverance.

MEDITATION VI.

The Great Thought of Eternity.

1. Thus did St. Augustine designate the thought of eternity: "The great thought"—"magna cogitatio." It was this thought that induced so many solitaries to retire into deserts; so many religious, even kings and queens, to shut themselves up in cloisters; and so many martyrs to sacrifice their lives in the midst of torments, in order to acquire a happy eternity in heaven, and to avoid a miserable eternity in hell. The Ven. John of Avila converted a certain lady with these two words: "Reflect," said he to her, "on these two words: Ever and Never." A certain monk went down into a grave that he might meditate continually on eternity, and constantly repeated, "O eternity! eternity!"

How frequently, my God, have I deserved the eternity of hell! Oh, that I had never offended Thee! Grant me sorrow for my sins; have compassion on me.

2. The same Ven. John of Avila says, that he who believes in eternity and becomes not a saint should be confined as one deranged. He who builds a house for himself takes great pains to make it commodious, airy, and handsome, and says: "I labor and give myself a great deal of trouble about this house, because I shall have to live in it all my life." And yet how little is the house of eternity thought of! When we shall have arrived at eternity there will be no question of our residing in a house more or less commodious, or more or less airy: the question will be of our dwelling in a palace overflowing with delights, or in a gulf of endless torments. And for how long a time? not for forty or fifty years, but forever, as long as God shall be God. The saints, to obtain salvation, thought it little to give their

whole lives to prayer, penance, and the practice of good works. And what do we do for the same end?

O my God! many years of my life are already past, already death is near at hand, and what good have I hitherto done for Thee? Give me light, and strength, to devote the remainder of my days to Thy service. Too much, alas! have I offended Thee; I desire henceforth to love Thee.

3. *With fear and trembling work out your salvation.*[1] To obtain salvation we must tremble at the thought of being lost, and tremble not so much at the thought of hell, as of sin, which alone can send us thither. He who dreads sin avoids dangerous occasions, frequently recommends himself to God, and has recourse to the means of keeping himself in the state of grace. He who acts thus will be saved; but for him who lives not in this manner it is morally impossible to be saved. Let us attend to that saying of St. Bernard: "We cannot be too secure where eternity is at stake."[2]

Thy blood, O Jesus, my Redeemer! is my security. I should have been already lost on account of my sins, hadst Thou not offered me Thy pardon, on condition of my repentance for having offended Thee. I am sorry therefore with my whole heart for having offended Thee, who art infinite goodness. I love Thee, O sovereign good! above every other good. I know that Thou willest my salvation, and I will endeavor to secure it by loving Thee forever. O Mary, Mother of God! pray to Jesus for me.

MEDITATION VII.

The Death of Jesus Christ.

1. How is it possible to believe that the Creator should have been willing to die for us, his creatures? Yet we

[1] "Cum metu et tremore vestram salutem operamini."—*Phil.* ii. 12.

[2] Nulla nimis securitas, ubi periclitatur æternitas.

must believe it because faith so teaches it. Hence the Council of Nice commands us to confess: "I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who for us men and for our salvation was crucified for us, suffered, and was buried." [1]

And if it is true, O God of love! that Thou hast died for the love of men, can there be one who believes this, and does not love Thee, so loving a God? But, O God! of those who are guilty of such ingratitude I am one; and not only have I not loved Thee, my Redeemer, but I have many times, for the sake of gratifying my miserable and depraved inclinations, renounced Thy grace and Thy love.

2. Thou hast then, my Lord and my God, died for me; and how could I, knowing this, have so often disowned Thee and turned my back upon Thee? But Thou, my Saviour, didst come down from heaven to save that which was lost.[2] My ingratitude, therefore, does not deprive me of the hope of pardon. Yes, O Jesus! I hope that Thou wilt pardon me all offences which I have committed against Thee, through the death which Thou didst suffer for me on Mount Calvary. Oh that I could die of grief and of love as often as I think of the offences which I have committed against the love which Thou hast shown towards me! Make known to me, O Lord! what I must do henceforward to make amends for my ingratitude. Keep up in my mind a continual remembrance of the bitter death Thou wast pleased to suffer for me, that I may love Thee and never more offend Thee.

3. God, then, has died for me; and shall I be able to

[1] Credo . . . in unum Dominum Jesum Christum, Filium Dei . . . qui propter nos homines, et propter nostram salutem . . . crucifixus . . . passus et sepultus est.

[2] "Venit enim Filius hominis salvare quod perierat."—*Matt.* xviii.

love anything else but God? No, my Jesus, I will love none but Thee. Thou hast loved me too much. Thou canst do no more to compel me to love Thee. I have obliged Thee by my sins to cast me away from Thy face; but Thou hast not abandoned me forever; Thou regardest me with tender affection; Thou art about to call me to Thy love; I will no longer resist. I love Thee, my sovereign good; I love Thee, my God, who art worthy of infinite love; I love Thee, my God, who hast died for me. I love Thee, but I love Thee not enough; do Thou increase my love. Grant that I may forsake all things, and forget all things else, to please and to love Thee, my Redeemer, my love, and my all. O Mary, my hope! recommend me to thy divine Son.

MEDITATION VIII.

The Abuse of God's Mercy.

1. There are two ways by which the devil endeavors to deceive men to their eternal ruin: after they have committed sin he tempts them to despair on account of the severity of divine justice; but before they have sinned he encourages them to do so by the hope of obtaining the divine mercy. And he effects the ruin of numberless souls as well by the second as by the first artifice. "God is merciful," says the obstinate sinner to him who would convert him from the iniquity of his ways. "God is merciful." But as the Mother of God expresses it in her canticle, *His mercy is to them that fear Him.*[1] Yes, the Lord deals mercifully with him that fears to offend him, but not so with the man who presumes upon his mercy to offend him still more.

O God! I give Thee thanks for having made me sensible of Thy patience in bearing with me. Behold, I am

[1] "Misericordia ejus timentibus eum."—*Luke* i. 50.

of the number of those who, presuming on Thy goodness, have offended Thee again and again.

2. God is merciful; but he is also just. Sinners are desirous that he should be merciful only, without being just; but that is impossible, because were he only to forgive and never to chastise, he would be wanting in justice. Hence Father Avila observes that patience on the part of God towards those who avail themselves of his compassion to offend him the more, would not be compassion, but a want of justice. He is bound to chastise the ungrateful. He bears with them for a certain time, but after that abandons them.

Such a punishment, O God! has not as yet overtaken me, or else I had now dwelt in hell, or had been obstinate in my sins. But no: I desire to amend my life; I desire to offend Thee no more. Though I have hitherto displeased Thee, I am sorry for it with my whole soul; I desire henceforth to love Thee, and I desire to love Thee more than others do, because Thou hast not shown the same patience towards others as towards me.

3. *God is not mocked.*[1] Yet he would be mocked, if the sinner could go on continually offending him, and yet afterwards enjoy him in heaven. *What things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap.*[2] He who sows good works shall reap rewards; but he who sows iniquities shall reap chastisements. The hope of those who commit sin because God is forgiving, is an abomination in his sight: *their hope*, says holy Job, *is an abomination.*[3] Hence the sinner, by such hope, provokes God to chastise him the sooner, as that servant would provoke his master, who, because his master was good, took advantage of his goodness to behave ill.

O Jesus! such, I fear, has been my conduct towards

[1] "Deus non irridetur."—*Gal.* vi. 7.

[2] "Quæ seminaverit homo, hæc et metet."—*Ibid.* 8.

[3] "Spes illorum abominatio."—*Job*, xi. 20.

Thee; because Thou wast good I have made no account of Thy precepts. I confess that I have done wickedly; and I detest all the offences I have committed against Thee. Now do I love Thee more than myself, and I desire never more to displease Thee. Ah, if I should again offend Thee by mortal sin! Permit it not, O Lord; rather let me die. O Mary, Mother of perseverance, do thou assist me.

MEDITATION IX.

The Emptiness and Shortness of Human Life.

1. Holy David said that the happiness of this life is as the dream of one awaking from sleep: *as the dream of them that awake.*[1] All the greatness and glory of this world will appear no more to poor wordlings, at the hour of death, than as a dream to one awaking from sleep, who finds that the fortune which he had acquired in his dream ends with his sleep. Hence, did one who was undeceived wisely write on the skull of a dead man, "*Cogitanti omnia vilescunt*"—He who thinks, undervalues all things. Yes, to him who thinks on death, all the goods of this life appear, as they really are, vile and transitory. Nor can that man fix his affections on the earth who reflects that in a short time he must leave it forever.

Ah, my God, how often have I despised Thy grace for the miserable goods of this world! Henceforth I desire to think of nothing but of loving and serving Thee. Assist me with Thy holy grace.

2. "And is it thus, then, that worldly grandeur and sovereign power must end?" Such was the exclamation of St. Francis Borgia, when he beheld the corpse of the Empress Isabella, who died in the flower of her youth. Reflecting upon what he saw, he resolved to bid adieu to the world, and to give himself entirely to God, say-

[1] "Velut somnium surgentium."—*Ps.* lxxii. 20.

ing, "I will henceforth serve a master who will never forsake me." Let us detach ourselves from present goods before death tears us away from them. What folly it is to expose ourselves to the danger of losing our souls, for the sake of some attachment to this miserable world, from which we shall soon have to depart; for soon it will be said to us by the minister of God, "Go forth, Christian soul, out of this world!"[1]

O my Jesus, that I had always loved Thee! How many offences have I been guilty of against Thee! Teach me how to correct my disorderly life, for I am willing to do whatever Thou pleasest. Accept of my love, accept of my repentance, in which I love Thee more than myself, and crave Thy mercy and compassion.

3. Reflect that you cannot remain forever in this world. You must one day leave the country in which you now reside; you must one day go out from the house in which you now dwell to return to it no more. Think that many before you inhabited the same room in which you are at present reading; that they slept in the same bed in which you are accustomed to sleep; and where are they? gone into eternity. The same will happen to you.

Make me sensible, O God, of the injustice I have been guilty of in turning my back upon Thee, my sovereign good; and grant me the sorrow to bewail my ingratitude as I ought. O that I had died rather than ever offended Thee! Suffer me not to live any longer ungrateful for the love which Thou hast shown me. My dear Redeemer, I love Thee above all things, and I desire to love Thee to the best of my power during the remainder of life. Strengthen my weakness by Thy grace; and do thou, Mary, Mother of God, intercede for me.

[1] Proficiscere, anima Christiana, de hoc mundo.

MEDITATION X.

The Contempt with which the Sinner treats God.

1. God himself declares that the sinner treats him with contempt, and complains of it in these words: *I have brought up children, and exalted them; but they have despised me.*[1] I have brought up my children, I have preserved and nourished them, but with base ingratitude they have despised me. But who is God who is thus despised by men? He is the Creator of heaven and earth; he is the sovereign infinite good, in whose sight men and angels are as a drop of water, or a grain of sand: *as a drop of a bucket, as a little dust.*[2] In a word, all things created, in the presence of his infinite greatness, are as though they were not: *All nations are before him as if they had no being at all, and counted to him nothing and vanity.*[3]

Behold me, O God! a daring sinner who have presumed to despise Thy infinite majesty. But whilst Thou art infinite majesty, Thou art also infinite mercy. I love Thee, O Lord! and because I love Thee I am sorry for having offended Thee; do Thou have pity on me.

2. And, O God! who am I who have despised Thee? A poor helpless worm, who have nothing but what Thou in Thy bounty hast bestowed upon me. Thou hast given me my soul, my body, the use of reason, and numberless other benefits in this world; and I have made no other use of them all but to offend Thee, my benefactor. Nay, more; at the very time that Thou didst preserve my life, that I might not fall into hell as I deserved, I abused Thy goodness and forbearance. O my Saviour! how couldst Thou have had such patience with me? Wretch

[1] "Filios enutrivi et exaltavi; ipsi autem spreverunt me."—*Isa.* i. 2.

[2] "Quasi stilla situlæ . . . quasi pulvis exiguus."—*Ibid.* xl. 15.

[3] "Omnes gentes quasi non sint, sic sunt coram eo."—*Ibid.* xl. 17.

that I am, how many nights I slept under Thy displeasure! But Thou wouldst not have me perish. I trust, O my Jesus! in Thy blessed Passion that Thou wilt enable me to change my life. Let not that sacred blood be lost, which with so much pain and sorrow Thou didst shed for my salvation.

3. But, O God! what have I done! Thou, my Redeemer, hast shown that regard for my soul, so as to shed Thy blood for its salvation, and I have been so wretched as to allow it to perish for a mere nothing, for a caprice, for a maddening passion, for a miserable gratification, for contempt of Thy grace and love. Ah! if faith did not assure me that Thou hast promised to pardon those who repent, I should not now dare to implore Thy forgiveness. O my Saviour! I kiss Thy sacred wounds, and for the love of these wounds I beseech Thee to forget the injuries which I have committed against Thee. Thou hast said that, when the sinner repents, Thou wilt forget all his ingratitude. I am sorry above every evil for having despised Thee, my sovereign good; make haste to pardon me, as Thou hast promised; let me be quickly reconciled to Thee. I love Thee now more than myself; may I never more incur Thy displeasure. O Mary, refuge of sinners! succor a poor sinner who invokes thy assistance.

MEDITATION XI.

The Pain of Loss.

1. The greatest pain of hell is not the fire nor the darkness, not the stench, nor any other of all the material torments of that dreadful prison of despair; it is the pain of loss—that is, the pain of having lost God—which of itself may be said to constitute hell. The soul was created to be forever united with God, and to enjoy the sight of his enrapturing countenance. God is its last

end, its only good, so that all the goods of earth and heaven, without God, could not make it happy. Hence it is that if a condemned soul in hell could possess and love God, hell, with all its torments, would be to it a paradise. But this will be its sovereign punishment, which will render it forever inconceivably miserable, to be deprived of God for all eternity, without the least hope of ever again beholding him or loving him.

Jesus, my Redeemer! nailed to the cross for my sake, Thou art my hope; oh that I had died rather than offended Thee!

2. The soul, being created for God, has an instinctive tendency to become united with its sovereign good, its God; but being united with the body, when it wallows in iniquity, it becomes so darkened by the created objects which allure the senses that it loses its sight, and has so little knowledge of God as no longer to desire to be united with him. But when separated from the body, and from sensible objects, then it will know that God is the only good that can render it happy. Therefore, as soon as it shall have departed hence, it will feel itself drawn with most powerful attraction towards a union with God; but having left this life an enemy of God, it will be not only kept back from him by its sins, as by a chain, but dragged by them into hell, there to be forever separated and at a distance from God. The wretched soul in that eternal dungeon will know how beautiful God is, but will not be able to behold him. It will know how amiable God is, but will not be able to love him; it will even feel itself forced by its sins to hate him; and this will be its hell of hells, to know that it hates a God who is infinitely lovely. It will desire that it were possible to destroy God, to whom it is hateful; and to destroy itself, hating God; and this will be the eternal occupation of this unhappy soul.

Do Thou, O Lord! have pity on me.

3. This torment will be immensely increased by the remembrance of the graces that God bestowed upon it, and the love which he evinced towards it during its lifetime. It will especially call to mind the love of Jesus Christ in shedding his blood, and laying down his life for its salvation; but, ungrateful soul, not to forego its own miserable gratifications, it consented to lose God, its sovereign good; and it will find that no hope will be left of ever regaining him.

Ah, my God! were I in hell, I should not be able to love Thee, nor to repent of my sins; but as I have it now in my power to repent and to love Thee, I am sorry with my whole soul for having offended Thee, and love Thee above all things. Grant me to remember continually that hell which I have deserved, that I may love Thee with still greater and greater fervor. O Mary, refuge of sinners! do not abandon me.

MEDITATION XII.

The Particular Judgment.

1. *It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment.*[1] It is of faith, that immediately after death we shall be judged according to our works in this life. And it is also of faith, that upon this judgment will depend our eternal salvation or perdition. Imagine yourself to be in your agony, and to have only a short time to live. Think that in a short time you would then have to appear before Jesus Christ to give an account of your whole life. Alas! how alarming would the sight of your sins then be to you!

Jesus, my Redeemer! pardon me, I beseech Thee, before Thou judgest me. I know that I have many times

[1] "Statutum est hominibus semel mori; post hoc autem, judicium." *Heb.* ix. 27.

already deserved to be sentenced to eternal death. No, I desire not to present myself guilty before Thee, but penitent and pardoned. O my sovereign good! I am grievously sorry for having offended Thee.

2. O God! what will be the anguish of the soul when it shall first behold Jesus Christ as its judge, and behold him terrible in his wrath? It will then see how much he has suffered for its sake; it will see what great mercies he has exercised towards it, and what powerful means he has bestowed upon it for the attainment of salvation; then will it also see the greatness of eternal goods, and the vileness of earthly pleasures, which have wrought its ruin; it will then see all these things, but to no purpose, because then there will be no more time to correct its past errors; what shall have then been done will be irrevocable. Before the judgment-seat of God, no nobility, nor dignity, nor riches will be considered; our works alone will be weighed there.

Grant, O Jesus! that when I first behold Thee I may see Thee appeased; and, for this end, grant me the grace to weep, during the remainder of my life, over the evil which I have done in turning my back upon Thee, to follow my own sinful caprices. No, I desire never more to offend Thee. I love Thee and desire to love Thee forever.

3. What contentment will that Christian enjoy at the hour of death who has left the world to give himself to God; who has denied his senses all unlawful gratifications; and who, if he has on some occasions been wanting, has at last been wise enough afterwards to do worthy penance for it! On the other hand, what anguish will that Christian experience who has continually relapsed into the same vices, and at last finds himself at the point of death! Then will he exclaim: "Alas! in a few moments I must appear before Jesus as my judge, and I have not as yet even begun to change my life! I have many times

promised to do so, but I have not done it; and now, in a short time, what will become of me?"

Ah, my Jesus and my judge! I return Thee thanks for the patience with which Thou hast hitherto waited for me. How many times have I myself written my own eternal condemnation! Since Thou hast thus waited to pardon me, reject me not, now prostrate at Thy feet. Receive me into Thy favor through the merits of Thy bitter Passion. I am sorry, my sovereign good! for having despised Thee. I love Thee above all things. I desire never more to forsake Thee. O Mary! recommend me to thy Son Jesus, and do not abandon me.

MEDITATION XIII.

Preparation for the Particular Judgment.

1. *Be you ready: for at what hour you think not, the Son of man will come.*[1] The time of death will not be the time to prepare ourselves to die well; to die well and happily, we must prepare ourselves beforehand. There will not be time then to eradicate bad habits from the soul, to expel from the heart its predominant passions, and to extinguish all affection to earthly goods. *The night cometh when no man can work.*[2] All in death will be night; when nothing will be seen; and, hence, nothing done. The heart hardened, the mind obscured, confusion, fear, the desire of health, will all render it almost impossible at the hour of death to set in order a conscience confused and entangled in sin.

O Sacred wounds of my Redeemer! I adore you, I humbly kiss you, and I confide in you.

2. The saints thought they did but little, though they spent their whole lives in preparing for death, by acts of

[1] "Estote parati, quia, qua hora non putatis, Filius hominis veniet." *Luke*, xii. 40.

[2] "Venit nox, quando nemo potest operari."—*John*, ix. 4.

penance, prayer, and the practice of good works; and they trembled when they came to die. The venerable John Avila, although he had led a very holy life from his youth, when it was announced to him that he was about to die, made answer and said, "Oh that I had a little more time to prepare myself for death!" And what shall we say when the summons of death shall be brought to us?

No, my God, I do not wish to die disquieted and ungrateful, as at present I should die, if death were to overtake me; I desire to change my life, I desire to bewail my offences against Thee, I desire to love Thee with my whole heart. O Lord! help me, enable me to do something for Thee before I die,—for Thee who hast died for the love of me.

3. *The time is short*,[1] says the Apostle. Yes, we have but a short time in which to set our accounts in order. Hence the Holy Ghost admonishes us, *Whatsoever thy hand is able to do, do it quickly*.[2] Whatever thou art able to do to-day, put it not off till to-morrow; for to-day is passing away, and to-morrow may bring death, which will deprive thee of all means of doing good, or of amending what thou hast done amiss. Woe to me! if death should find me still attached to this world.

Ah, my God, how many years have I lived at a distance from Thee! And how hast Thou had so much patience with me, in waiting for me and in calling me so often to repentance! I thank Thee, O my Redeemer! for Thy long forbearance, and I hope to thank Thee for it forever in heaven. *The mercies of the Lord I will sing forever*.[3] Hitherto I have not loved Thee, and have made little account of being or not being loved by Thee, but now

[1] "Tempus breve est."—1 *Cor.* vii. 29.

[2] "Quodcumque facere potest manus tua, instanter operare." *Eccles.* ix. 10.

[3] "Misericordias Domini in æternum cantabo."—*Ps.* lxxxviii. 2.

I do love Thee with my whole heart; I love Thee above all things, more than I love myself, and I desire nothing so much as to be loved by Thee; and, recollecting how I have despised Thy love, I would willingly die of grief for having done so. Jesus, grant me perseverance in virtue. Mary, my holy mother, obtain for me the happiness of being faithful to God.

MEDITATION XIV.

The Suffering of Souls in Hell in their Mental Faculties.

1. The souls in hell will be tormented in their *memory*. Never, in the abode of infinite misery will they lose for a moment the remembrance of the time that was allowed them in this life to practise virtue, and to make amends for the evil which they have done; and never will it be concealed from them that there is no longer the least hope of remedy. They will call to mind the lights which they received from God, his many loving calls, his offers of pardon, all despised; and they will see that all is now at an end, and that nothing remains for them, but to suffer and to despair for all eternity.

O Jesus! Thy blood, Thy sufferings, and Thy death are my trust and hope. Alas! suffer me not to fall into hell, there to curse forever even the blessings which Thou hast bestowed upon me.

2. The souls in hell will be tormented in their *understanding*, by thinking continually of heaven, which they have wilfully lost through their own fault. The immense felicity enjoyed by the blessed in the abode of delights will be forever before their eyes; and this will render their life of dreadful sufferings, which they must drag on forever in the prison of despair and woe, still more tormenting.

Had I then died, my Redeemer, when I was in sin, I should now have had no hope of ever enjoying Thee in

heaven! Thou gavest me life that I might gain heaven, and now have I lost heaven for something worse than nothing, by losing Thy grace! I love Thee, O God, and I am sorry for having offended Thee; and I hope, through the merits of Thy Passion, to come to love Thee forever in heaven.

3. The souls in hell will be tormented in their *will*, by being denied everything which they desire, and by having every punishment inflicted upon them which they do not desire. They will never have anything which they wish for, but everything which they abhor. They will long to rid themselves of their torments and to find peace; but there will be no peace for them; they will be forced to dwell in the midst of their torments forever. Their perverse will, by hating God when they know him to be the supreme good, and worthy of infinite love, will become their greatest torment.

So it is, my God; Thou art an infinite good and worthy of infinite love, and I have exchanged Thee for nothing! Oh that I had died and had not offered Thee so grievous an injury! I love Thee, my sovereign good. Have pity on me and suffer me not to be again ungrateful to Thee! I renounce all the delights of this world, and embrace Thee as my only good. I will be forever Thine; be Thou forever mine. This is my hope, my God, my love, and my all. *Deus meus et omnia.* O Mary! thou art all-powerful with God; obtain for me the grace of leading a holy life.

MEDITATION XV.

Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

1. Jesus is the mediator of justice; Mary obtains for us grace; for, as St. Bernard, St. Bonaventure, St. Bernardine of Sienna, St. Germanus, St. Antoninus, and others say, it is the will of God to dispense through the hands

of Mary whatever graces he is pleased to bestow upon us. With God, the prayers of the saints are the prayers of his friends, but the prayers of Mary are the prayers of his mother. Happy they who confidently and at all times have recourse to this divine mother! This, above all others, is the most pleasing devotion to the Blessed Virgin, ever to have recourse to her and to say: O Mary! intercede for me with thy Son Jesus.

2. Jesus is omnipotent by nature; Mary is very powerful by grace; she obtains whatever she asks for. It is impossible, says St. Antoninus, that this mother should ask any favor of her Son for those who are devout to her, and the Son not grant her request. Jesus delights to honor his mother by granting whatever she asks of him. Hence St. Bernard exhorts us to seek for grace, and to seek for it through Mary; because she is a mother to whom nothing can be denied.[1] If, then, we should be saved, let us recommend ourselves to Mary, that she may intercede for us, because her prayers are always heard. O mother of mercy! have pity on me. Thou art styled the advocate of sinners; assist me, therefore, a sinner placing my confidence in thee.

3. Let us not doubt whether Mary will hear us when we address our prayers to her. It is her delight to exercise her powerful influence with God in obtaining for us whatever graces we stand in need of. It is sufficient to ask favors of Mary to obtain them. If we are unworthy of them, she renders us worthy, by her powerful intercession; and she is very desirous that we should have recourse to her, that she may save us. What sinner ever perished, who, with confidence and perseverance, had recourse to Mary, the refuge of sinners? He is lost who has not recourse to Mary.

O Mary, my mother and my hope! I take refuge

[1] "Quæramus gratiam, et per Mariam quæramus; quia Mater est, et frustrari non potest."—*S. de Aquæd.*

under thy protection; reject me not, as I have deserved. Protect me and have pity on me, a miserable sinner. Obtain for me the forgiveness of my sins; obtain for me holy perseverance, the love of God, a good death, and a happy eternity. I hope all things of thee, because thou art most powerful with God. Make me holy, since thou hast it in thy power to do so, by thy holy intercession. O Mary! in thee do I confide, in thee do I place all my hopes, next to thy divine Son Jesus.

MEDITATION XVI.

Jesus suffering for our Sins.

1. Seeing men lost in their sins, God was pleased to take pity on them; but his divine justice required satisfaction, and there was no one capable of making adequate satisfaction. On this account he sent into the world his own Son, made man, and loaded him with all our offences: *The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all*,[1] so that he might pay our debts, satisfy divine justice, and save mankind.

O eternal God! what more couldst Thou have done to induce us to confide in Thy mercy, and to attract our hearts to Thy love, than give us even Thy own Son? But how could I, after all that Thou hast done for me, have been guilty of so many offences against Thee? O my God! for the love of this Thy Son, have pity on me. I am sorry above every evil for having offended Thee. And though I have grievously offended Thee, I desire to love Thee with the greatest fervor; give me strength so to love Thee.

2. The eternal Father having loaded his Son with all our crimes, was not content even with such satisfaction from him, as would have amply atoned for us all, but, as

[1] "Posuit Dominus in eo iniquitatem omnium nostrum."—*Isa.* liii. 6.

Isaias continues: *The Lord was pleased to bruise him in infirmity.*[1] He would have him mangled to exhaustion, with scourges, thorns, nails, and torments, until he died of tortures on an infamous gibbet.

If faith, O God! did not assure us of this excess of Thy love towards men, who could possibly believe it? O God, worthy of all love! permit us not to be any more ungrateful to Thee. Enlighten and strengthen us to correspond with such immense love during the remainder of our lives; do this, we beseech Thee, for the love of this Thy Son, whom Thou hast given to us.

3. Behold that innocent Son, attentive to the will of his Father, who would have him thus sacrificed for our sins, full of humility before his Father, full of love towards us, obediently embraces his life of pain and his bitter death: *He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross.*[2]

Dearest Saviour, I will therefore say to Thee with the penitent Ezechias: *Thou hast delivered my soul that it should not perish; Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back.*[3] I had deserved by my sins to be cast into hell, but Thou hast delivered me from it, and, as I hope, pardoned me. I had offended Thy divine majesty, and Thou hast loaded Thyself with my crimes, and hast suffered for me. After this, if I should again offend Thee, or if I should not love Thee with my whole heart, what punishment will ever be sufficient for my chastisement? Beloved Jesus, O love of my soul! I am exceedingly sorry for having so grievously offended Thee. I give Thee my whole self; accept of me, and suffer me not to be any more separated from Thee. Holy Virgin, Mary, Mother,

[1] "Dominus voluit conterere eum in infirmitate."—*Isa.* liii. 10.

[2] "Humiliavit semetipsum, factus obediens usque ad mortem, mortem autem crucis."—*Phil.* ii. 8.

[3] "Tu autem eruisti animam meam, ut non periret; projecisti post tergum tuum omnia peccata mea."—*Isa.* xxxviii. 17.

pray to thy divine Son for me, that he may be pleased to accept of me, and make me all his own.

MEDITATION XVII.

The One Thing Necessary.

1. *One thing is necessary*,[1] the salvation of our souls. It is not necessary to be great, noble, or rich in this world, or to enjoy uninterrupted health; but it is necessary to save our souls. For this has God placed us here: not to acquire honors, riches, or pleasures, but to acquire by our good works that eternal kingdom which is prepared for those who, during this present life, fight against and overcome the enemies of their eternal salvation.

Ah, my Jesus, how often have I renounced heaven by renouncing Thy grace! But, O Lord! I am more grieved for having forfeited Thy friendship than for having lost heaven. Give me, O Jesus! a great sorrow for my sins, and mercifully pardon me.

2. Of what consequence is it if a man be poor, mean, infirm, and despised in this life, provided that in the end he dies in the grace of God and secures his salvation? The more he has been afflicted with tribulations, if he suffered them with patience, the more will he be glorified in the kingdom of heaven. On the other hand, what does it profit a man to abound in riches and honors, if, when he dies, he is lost forever? If we are lost, all the goods that we have enjoyed in this world will be remembered only to increase our misery for eternity.

Do Thou, my God, enlighten me; give me to understand that my only evil is to offend Thee, and my only good to love Thee. Enable me to spend the remainder of my days in serving Thee.

3. Salvation is necessary, because there is no medium;

[1] "Unum est necessarium."—*Luke*, x. 42.

we must either be saved or lost. It will not do to say: I shall be satisfied with not going to hell; I shall not be concerned at being deprived of heaven. No; either heaven or hell; either forever happy with God in heaven in an ocean of delights, or forever trampled upon by devils in hell in an ocean of fire and torments: either saved, or lost; there is no alternative.

O Jesus! I have hitherto chosen hell, and for years past I should have been suffering there, if in pity Thou hadst not borne with me. I thank Thee, O my Saviour! and I am sorry above every evil for having offended Thee. I hope, for the future, with the assistance of Thy grace, to walk no more in the way that conducts to hell. I love Thee, O my sovereign good! and I desire to love Thee forever. Grant me perseverance in good, and save me through that blood which Thou hast shed for me. O Mary, my hope! intercede for me.

MEDITATION XVIII.

The Sinner's Disobedience to God.

1. Pharaoh, when Moses announced to him the orders of God for the liberation of the Hebrews, insolently answered, *Who is the Lord, that I should hear His word? . . . I know not the Lord.*[1] It is thus that the sinner replies to his own conscience when it intimates to him the divine precepts, which forbid him to do that which is evil: "I know not God; I know that he is my Lord, but I will not obey him."

Thus have I too often addressed Thee, O God! when I have committed sin. If Thou hadst not died for me, O my Redeemer! I should not dare to crave Thy pardon; but Thou hast offered me Thy pardon from the cross, if I be desirous of availing myself of it. I do indeed desire

[1] "Quis est Dominus, ut audiam vocem ejus? . . . Nescio Dominum."—*Exod.* v. 2.

it; I am sorry for having despised Thee, my sovereign good. I will rather die than offend Thee any more.

2. *Thou hast broken my yoke; thou saidst, I will not serve.*[1] The sinner, when tempted to commit sin, hears indeed the voice of God, saying to him, "My son, do not revenge thyself, do not gratify thyself with that infamous pleasure; relinquish the possession of that which is not thine." But by yielding to sin, he replies, "Lord, I will not serve thee. Thou desirest that I should not commit this sin, but I will commit it."

My Lord and my God, how frequently have I, not by my words, but my deeds and my will, thus daringly replied to Thee! Alas! cast me not away from Thy face.[2] I am now sensible of the wrong I have done Thee in parting with Thy graces for the gratification of my own wretched desires. Oh that I had died rather than ever offended Thee!

3. God is the Lord of all things, because he has created all. *All things are in Thy power, because Thou hast made heaven and earth, and all things that are under the cope of heaven.*[3] All creatures obey God; the heavens, the earth, the sea, the elements, the brute creation; while man, although he has been gifted and loved by God above all other creatures, obeys him not, and is heedless of the loss of his grace!

I give Thee thanks, O God, for having waited for me. What would have become of me, had I died in one of those nights in which I went to rest under Thy displeasure? But as Thou hast patiently waited for me, it is a sign that Thou art desirous of pardoning me. Pardon me then, O Jesus! I am sorry above every evil for

[1] "Confregisti jugum meum . . . et dixisti: Non serviam"—*Jer.* ii. 20.

[2] "Ne projicias me a facie tua."—*Ps.* l. 13.

[3] "In ditione enim tua cuncta sunt posita, et non est qui possit tuæ resistere voluntati."—*Esth.* xiii. 9.

having ever lost the respect which is due to Thee. But then I did not love Thee; now I do love Thee more than myself, and I am ready to die a thousand times rather than again forfeit Thy grace and friendship. Thou hast said that Thou lovest those who love Thee.[1] I love Thee; do Thou love me in return, and give me grace to live and die in Thy love; that so I may love Thee forever. Mary, my refuge, through thee do I hope to remain faithful to God until the hour of my death.

MEDITATION XIX.

The Merciful Chastisements of God.

1. God, being infinite goodness, desires only our good and to communicate to us his own happiness. When he chastises us, it is because we have obliged him to do so by our sins. Hence the prophet Isaias says that on such occasions he doth *a work foreign to his desires.*[2] Hence it is said that it is the property of God to have mercy and to spare, to dispense his favors and to make all happy.

O God! it is this Thy infinite goodness which sinners offend and despise, when they provoke Thee to chastise them. Wretch that I am, how often have I offended Thy infinite goodness!

2. Let us therefore understand that when God threatens us it is not because he desires to punish us, but because he wishes to deliver us from punishment; he threatens because he would have compassion on us. *O God, . . . Thou hast been angry, and hast had mercy on us.*[3] But how is this? he is angry with us, and treats us with mercy? Yes! He shows himself angry towards us, in order that we may amend our lives, and that thus he may be able

[1] "Ego diligentes me diligo."—*Prov.* viii. 17.

[2] "Alienum opus ejus . . . peregrinum est opus ejus ab eo."—*Isa.* xxviii. 21.

[3] "Deus, . . . iratus es, et misertus es nobis."—*Ps.* lix. 3.

to pardon and save us; hence if in this life he chastises us for our sins, he does so in his mercy, for by so doing he frees us from eternal woe. How unfortunate, then, is the sinner who escapes punishment in this life!

Since then, O God! I have so much offended Thee, chastise me in this life, that Thou mayest spare me in the next. I know that I have certainly deserved hell; I accept all kinds of pain, that Thou mayest reinstate me in Thy grace and deliver me from hell, where I should be forever separated from Thee. Enlighten and strengthen me to overcome every obstacle to Thy favor.

3. He who makes no account of the divine threats ought much to fear lest the chastisement threatened in the Proverbs should suddenly overtake him. *The man that with a stiff neck despiseth him that reproveth him, shall suddenly be destroyed; and health shall not follow him.*[1] A sudden death shall overtake him that despises God's reprehensions, and he shall have no time to avoid eternal destruction.

This, O Jesus! has happened to many, and I indeed have deserved that the like should happen to me; but, O my Redeemer! Thou hast shown that mercy towards me which Thou hast not shown to many others who have offended Thee less frequently than I have done, and who are now suffering in hell without the least hope of ever again being able to regain Thy favor. I know, O Lord! that Thou desirest my salvation, and I also desire it, that I may please Thee. I renounce all, and turn myself to Thee, who art my God and my only good. I believe in Thee, I hope in Thee, I love Thee, and Thee alone. O infinite goodness! I am exceedingly displeased with myself for having hitherto done evil against Thee; and I wish that I had suffered every evil rather than offended Thee. Suffer me not any more to depart from Thee,

[1] "Viro qui corripientem dura cervice contemnit, repentinus ei superveniet interitus, et eum sanitas non sequetur."—*Prov.* xxix. 1.

rather let me die than offer Thee so great an injury. In Thee, my crucified Jesus, do I place all my hopes. O Mary, mother of Jesus! recommend me to thy Son.

MEDITATION XX.

The Patience of God with Sinners.

1. The more we have experienced the patient mercies of God, the more we ought to be afraid of continuing to abuse them, lest the time of God's vengeance overtake us. *Revenge is Mine, and I will repay in due time.*[1] God will put an end to his forbearance towards those who will not cease to abuse it.

I give Thee thanks, O Lord! for having patiently borne with me, though I have so often betrayed Thee. Make me sensible of the evil that I have done by abusing Thy patience for so long a time; make me sorry for all the offences I have committed against Thee. No, I will never more abuse Thy tender mercy.

2. "Commit this sin; you can afterwards confess it." Such is the artifice with which the devil has drawn many souls into hell. Many Christians, now in hell, have been lost by this delusion. *The Lord waiteth, that He may have mercy on you.*[2] God waits for the sinner, that the sinner may be converted, and obtain mercy; but when God sees that the time which he allows the sinner for doing penance is employed only in increasing the number of his offences, then he waits no longer, but punishes him as he deserves.

Pardon me, O God! for I desire never more to offend Thee. And why should I delay? that Thou mayest condemn me to hell? I fear indeed that now Thou canst no longer have patience with me. I have indeed offended Thee too grievously. I am sorry for it. I repent of it.

[1] "Mea est ultio, et ego retribuam in tempore."—*Deut.* xxxii. 35.

[2] "Exspectat Dominus, ut misereatur vestri."—*Isa.* xxx. 18.

I hope for forgiveness through the merits of that blood which Thou hast shed for me.

3. *The mercies of the Lord that we are not consumed: because His commiserations have not failed.*[1] Thus should he exclaim who finds, to his confusion, that he has frequently offended God. He should be most grateful to God for not having suffered him to die in his sins, and be most careful not to offend him again; otherwise the Lord will reproach him, saying: *What more could I have done for My vineyard that I have not done?*[2] God will say to him: Ungrateful soul! if thou hadst committed the same offences against man, who is viler than the earth, verily he would not have borne with thee. And how great mercies have I exercised towards thee! How many times have I called thee, and enlightened thee, and pardoned thee? The time of punishment is at hand; the time of forgiveness is past.—Thus has God spoken to many who are now suffering in hell; where one of their greatest torments is the remembrance of the mercies which they formerly received from God.

Jesus, my Redeemer and my Judge! I also have deserved to hear the same from Thy mouth; but I hear Thee now again calling me to pardon: *Be converted to the Lord thy God.*[3] O accursed sin, which has made me lose my God, how much do I abhor and detest thee! I turn my whole self towards Thee, my Lord and my God! My sovereign good, I love Thee; and because I love Thee I repent with my whole soul for having, during the time that is past, so much despised Thee. My God! I desire never more to offend Thee: give me Thy love, grant me perseverance. Mary, my refuge, succor and help me.

[1] "Misericordiæ Domini, quia non sumus consumpti."—*Lam.* iii. 22.

[2] "Quid est quod debui ultra facere vineæ meæ et non feci?"—*Isa.* v. 4.

[3] "Convertere ad Dominum Deum tuum."—*Osee,* xiv. 2.

MEDITATION XXI.

Death, the Passage to Eternity.

1. It is of faith that my soul is immortal, and that one day, when I least think of it, I must leave this world. I ought therefore to make a provision for myself, which will not fail with this life, but will be eternal even as I am eternal. Great things were done here, in their lifetime, by an Alexander or a Cæsar; but for how many ages past have their glories ceased! and where are they now?

O my God, that I had always loved Thee! What now remains for me, after so many years spent in sin, but trouble and remorse of conscience? But since Thou dost allow me time to repair the evil which I have done, behold me, Lord, ready to perform whatever Thou requirest of me, whatever Thou pleasest. I will spend the remainder of my days in bewailing my ungrateful conduct towards Thee, and in loving Thee with all my power, my God and my all, my only good.

2. What will it avail me to have been happy in this world (if indeed true happiness can be attained without God) if hereafter I should be miserable for all eternity? But what folly it is, to know that I must die, and that an eternity either of happiness or misery awaits me after death, and that upon dying ill or well depends my being miserable or happy forever, and yet, not to adopt every means in my power to secure a good death!

Holy Spirit, enlighten and strengthen me to live always in Thy grace, until the hour of my departure. O infinite goodness! I am sensible of the evil which I have done by offending Thee, and I detest it: I know that Thou alone art worthy of being loved, and I love Thee above all things.

3. In a word, all the good things of this life must end

at our burial and be left, while we are mouldering in our graves. The shadow of death will cover and obscure all the grandeur and splendor of this world. He only, then, can be called happy who serves God in this world, and by loving and serving him acquires eternal happiness.

O Jesus! I am truly sorry for having hitherto made so little account of Thy love. Now I love Thee above all things, and I desire nothing else but to love Thee. Henceforth Thou only shalt be the sole object of my love, Thou only shalt be my all; and this is the only inheritance I ask of Thee; to love Thee always, both in this life and in the next. For the merits of Thy bitter Passion, give me perseverance in all virtues. Mary, mother of God, thou art my hope.

MEDITATION XXII.

The Reformation of our Lives before Death.

1. Every one desires to die the death of the saints, but it is scarcely possible for the Christian to make a holy end who has led a disorderly life until the time of his death; to die united with God, after having always lived at a distance from him. The saints, in order to secure a happy death, renounced all the riches, the delights, and all the hopes which this world held out to them, and embraced poor and mortified lives. They buried themselves alive in this world, to avoid, when dead, being buried forever in hell.

O God! for how many years past have I deserved to be buried in that place of torments, without hope of pardon, or of being able to love Thee! But Thou hast waited in order to pardon me. Truly, then, am I sorry from the bottom of my heart for having offended Thee, my sovereign good; and have pity on me, and do not permit me to offend Thee any more.

2. God forewarns sinners that they will seek him in death and will not find him: *You shall seek and shall not find Me.*[1] They shall not find him because they will not then seek him through love, but only through the fear of hell; they will seek God without renouncing their affection for sin, and hence they shall not find him.

No, my God, I will not wait to seek Thee in death, but will seek and desire Thee from this moment. I am sorry for having hitherto given Thee so much displeasure by seeking to gratify my own inclinations. I am sorry for it, I confess that I have done evil. But Thou willest not that the heart that seeks Thee should despair, but rejoice: *Let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord.*[2] Yes, O Lord! I seek Thee, and I love Thee more than myself.

3. How miserable is the Christian who before his death has not spent a good part of his life in bewailing his sins! It is not to be denied that such a man may be converted at his death and obtain salvation; but the mind obscured, the heart hardened, the bad habits formed, the passions predominant, render it morally impossible for him to die happily. An extraordinary grace will be necessary for him; but does God reserve such a grace to bestow it upon one who has continued ungrateful to him even until the moment of death? O God, to what straits are sinners reduced to escape eternal destruction!

No, my God, I will not wait until death to repent of my sins and to love Thee. I am sorry now for having offended Thee; now do I love Thee with my whole heart. Suffer me not any more to turn my back upon Thee; rather let me die. O holy Mother, Mary, obtain for me perseverance in virtue.

[1] "Quæretis me, et non invenietis."—*John* vii. 34.
[2] "Lætetur cor quærentium Dominum."—*Ps.* civ. 3.

MEDITATION XXIII.

The Lamb of God Sacrificed for our Sins.

1. *Behold the Lamb of God,*[1] thus did the Baptist speak of our Blessed Redeemer, who offered his blood and even his life in sacrifice to obtain our pardon and our eternal salvation. Behold him in the hall of Pilate; as an innocent Lamb he permits himself to be shorn, not of wool, but of his sacred flesh, with thorns and scourges. *He shall be dumb as a lamb before His shearer, and He shall not open His mouth.*[2] He opens not his mouth, nor does he complain, because he desires to suffer himself the punishments due to our sins.

May the angels and all creatures bless Thee, O Saviour of the world! for the great mercy and love which Thou hast shown towards us. We had committed sins, and Thou didst make satisfaction for them!

2. Behold him, bound like a malefactor and surrounded by executioners, conducted to Calvary, there to become the victim of the great sacrifice, by which the work of our redemption is to be accomplished: *I was as a meek lamb that is carried to be a victim.*[3]

Whither, O Jesus! do the people conduct Thee, loaded with such a cross, after having so cruelly tormented Thee? Thou answerest me. They conduct Me to death, and I go willingly, because I am going to save thee, and to prove how great my love is towards thee. And how, O my Saviour! have I proved my love towards Thee? Thou indeed knowest: by injuries and grievous offences, and by my frequent contempt of Thy grace and love.

[1] "Ecce Agnus Dei."—*John*, i. 29.

[2] "Quasi agnus coram tondente se, obmutescet, et non aperiet os suum."—*Isa.* liii. 7.

[3] "Et ego quasi agnus mansuetus, qui portatur ad victimam."—*Jer.* xi. 19.

But Thy death is my hope. I am sorry, O Thou love of my soul! for having offended Thee; I am sorry, and will love Thee with my whole heart.

3. St. Francis of Assisi, seeing a lamb led to the slaughter, could not refrain from tears, saying, "As this lamb is led to the slaughter, so was my innocent Lord conducted for me to the death of the cross."

Since, then, O Jesus! Thou dost not refuse to go to sacrifice Thy life for the love of me, shall I refuse to give my whole self for the love of Thee? This Thou requirest of me: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God.*[1] This, and this only, do I desire—to love Thee, and to love Thee with my whole heart. Thou hast loved without any reserve, and so will I love Thee. I am sorry for having offended Thee, O Lamb of God! and I give my whole self to Thee. Accept of me, O Jesus! and make me faithful to Thy grace. O Mary, Mother of my Redeemer, make me by thy prayers entirely his!

MEDITATION XXIV.

The Value of Time.

1. Time is a treasure of inestimable value, because in every moment of time we may gain an increase of grace and eternal glory. In hell the lost souls are tormented with the thought, and bitterly lament that now there is no more time for them in which to rescue themselves by repentance from eternal misery. What would they give but for one hour of time to save themselves by an act of true sorrow from destruction! In heaven there is no grief; but if the blessed could grieve, they would do so for having lost so much time during life, in which they might have acquired greater glory, and because time is now no longer theirs.

[1] "Diliges Dominum Deum tuum."—*Matt.* xxii. 37.

I give Thee thanks, O God ! for giving me time to bewail my sins, and to make amends by my love for the offences I have committed against Thee.

2. Nothing is so precious as time; and yet how comes it that nothing is so little valued ? Men will spend hours in jesting, or standing at a window or in the middle of a road, to see what passes; and if you ask them what they are doing, they will tell you they are passing away time. O time, now so much despised ! thou wilt be of all things else the most valued by such persons when death shall have surprised them. What will they not then be willing to give for one hour of so much lost time! But time will remain no longer for them when it is said to each one of them: "Go forth, Christian soul, out of this world:"[1] hasten to be gone, for now there is no time for thee. How will they then exclaim, lamenting, Alas! I have squandered away my whole life; during so many years I might have become a saint; but how far am I from being such; and shall I become such, now that there is no more time for me ! But to what purpose will such lamentations be, when the dying man is on the verge of that moment on which will depend eternity?

3. *Walk whilst you have light.*[2] The time of death is the time of night, when nothing can any longer be seen, nor anything be accomplished. *The night cometh, in which no man can work.*[3] Hence the Holy Spirit admonishes us to walk in the way of the Lord, whilst we have the light and the day before us. Can we reflect that the time is near approaching in which the cause of our eternal salvation is to be decided, and still squander away time? Let us not delay, but immediately put our accounts in order, because when we least think of it, Jesus Christ will come

[1] Proficiscere, anima Christiana, de hoc mundo.

[2] "Ambulate dum lucem habetis."—*John*, xii. 35

[3] "Venit nox, quando nemo potest operari."—*John*, ix. 4.

to judge us. *At what hour ye think not, the Son of man will come.*[1]

Hasten, then, my Jesus, hasten to pardon me. And shall I delay? shall I delay until I am cast into that eternal prison, where, with the rest of the condemned souls, I must forever lament, saying, *The summer is past, and we are not saved?*[2] No, my Lord, I will no longer resist Thy loving invitations. Who knows but that this meditation which I am now reading may be the last I shall ever cast my eyes upon! I am sorry for having offended Thee, O sovereign good! To Thee do I consecrate the remainder of my days, and beseech Thee to grant me holy perseverance. I desire never more to offend Thee, but forever to love Thee. O Mary, refuge of sinners! in thee do I place my confidence.

MEDITATION XXV.

The Terrors of the Dying Man at the Thought of Approaching Judgment.

1. Consider the fear which the thought of judgment will cause in the mind of a dying man, when he reflects that in a very short time he must present himself before Jesus Christ, his Judge, to render an account of all the actions of his past life. When the awful moment of his passage out of this world into another, out of time into eternity, arrives, then will there be nothing so tormenting to him as the sight of his sins. St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi, being ill, and thinking of judgment, trembled. Her confessor told her not to fear. "Ah, Father," she replied, "it is an awful thing to appear before Jesus Christ as our Judge." Such were the sensations of this holy virgin, who was a saint from her infancy. What will he say who has frequently deserved hell?

[1] "Qua hora non putatis, Filius hominis veniet."—*Luke*, xii. 40.

[2] "Finita est æstas, et nos salvati non sumus."—*Jer.* viii. 20.

2. The abbot Agatho after many years of penance trembled, saying, "What will become of me when I shall be judged?" And how should he not tremble who has offended God by many mortal sins, and yet has done no penance for them? At death, the sight of his crimes, the rigor of the divine judgments, the uncertainty of the sentence to be pronounced upon him, what a tempest of horror and confusion will these raise around him! Let us be careful to throw ourselves at the feet of Jesus Christ, and secure our pardon before the arrival of our accounting day.

Ah! my Jesus and my Redeemer, who wilt one day be my judge, have pity on me before the day of justice. Behold at Thy feet a deserter, who has often promised to be faithful to Thee, and has as often again turned his back upon Thee. No, my God, Thou hast not deserved the treatment which Thou hast hitherto received at my hands. Forgive me, O Lord! for I desire truly to change and amend my life. I am sorry, my sovereign good! for having despised Thee: take pity on me.

3. Then will be decided the great affair of our eternal salvation. Upon this decision will depend our being either saved or lost forever, our being happy or miserable for all eternity. But, O God! each one knows this, and says, "So it is." But if it is so, why do we not leave all to attend only to our sanctification, and to the securing of our eternal salvation?

My God, I give Thee thanks for the light which Thou hast given me. Remember, O Jesus! that Thou didst die for my salvation; grant that when I first behold Thee I may see Thee appeased. If hitherto I have despised Thy grace, I now esteem it above every other good. I love Thee, O infinite goodness! and because I love Thee, I am sorry for having offended Thee. Hitherto I have forsaken Thee, but now I desire Thee and seek Thee; grant that I may find Thee, O God of my soul! Mary, my mother, recommend me to thy Son Jesus.

MEDITATION XXVI.

The Fire of Hell.

1. It is certain that hell is a pit of fire, in which the miserable souls of the wicked will be tormented forever. Even in this life the pain of burning is of all pains the most intense and dreadful; but the fire of hell has the power of inflicting much more excruciating torment, because it has been created by God to be the instrument of his wrath upon his rebellious creatures. "Go, ye cursed, into everlasting fire," is the sentence of the reprobate. And as in this sentence of condemnation fire is particularly mentioned, we may conclude that, of all the torments with which the senses of the wicked are afflicted, fire is the greatest.

Ah, my God, for how many years past have I deserved to burn in this fire! But Thou hast waited for me, to behold me burning, not with this dreadful fire, but with the blessed flames of Thy holy love. Wherefore do I love Thee, my sovereign good, and desire to love Thee forever.

2. In this world fire burns only outwardly, and does not penetrate our interior; but in hell the fire enters into the inmost recesses of its victims. *Thou shalt make them as an oven of fire.*[1] Every one will become as a furnace of fire, so that the heart will burn within the chest, the bowels within the carcass, the brains within the skull, and even the marrow within the bones. Sinners, what are your feelings with regard to this fire? You, who cannot now bear a spark accidentally fallen from a candle, nor a house too hot, nor a ray of the sun upon your head, how will you endure to be permanently immersed in an ocean of fire, where you will be forever dying, and yet never, never die?

[1] "Pones eos ut clibanum ignis."—*Ps.* xx. 10.

O my Redeemer! let not that blood which Thou didst shed for the love of me, be shed for me in vain. Grant me sorrow for my sins, grant me Thy holy love.

3. *Which of you,* saith the prophet, *can dwell with devouring fire?*[1] As a wild beast devoureth his prey, so shall the fire of hell continually devour the unhappy soul, but without ever depriving him of life. Hence St. Peter Damian exclaims, "Go on, sinner, go on, unchaste one; give thy flesh its desires: a day will come when thy impurities will be to thee as pitch within thy bowels, to nourish the fire which will consume thee in hell for all eternity."[2]

O my God, whom I have despised and lost! forgive me, and suffer me not to lose Thee any more. I am sorry above every evil for having offended Thee. Receive me into Thy favor, for now do I promise Thee that I will love Thee, and love no other but Thee. Most holy Mary, deliver me by thy holy intercession, from ever suffering the torments of hell.

MEDITATION XXVII.

The Vanity of all Worldly Things.

1. What is life but a vapor, which appears for a short time and then is seen no more? *What is your life?* says St. James; *it is a vapor which appeareth for a little while, and afterwards shall vanish away.*[3] The vapors which arise from the earth, when raised into the air and surrounded by the rays of the sun, appear brilliant and beautiful; but the least wind disperses them, and they

[1] "Quis poterit habitare de vobis cum igne devorante?"—*Isa.* xxxiii. 14.

[2] "Libido tua vertetur in picem, qua se perpetuus ignis in tuis visceribus nutriat."—*Opusc. de cœl. sac.* c. 3.

[3] "Quid est enim vita vestra? vapor est ad modicum parens, et deinceps exterminabitur."—*James,* iv. 15.

are seen no more. Such is the grandeur of this world. Behold that prince; to-day, he is feared, attended upon and honored by thousands; to-morrow, he will be dead, despised and hated by all. In a word, honors, pleasures, and riches must all end in death.

O my God! make me sensible of the immensity of Thy goodness, that I may love nothing but Thee.

2. Death deprives man of whatever he may possess in this world. What a sad sight, to behold a rich man, after death, carried out of his palace, to return thither no more! How sad to behold others taking possession of the estates which he has left, of his wealth, and whatever else he so lately enjoyed! His servants, after having accompanied him to his grave, abandon him, and leave him there, to be devoured by worms; no one esteeming him, no one flattering him. Formerly every one obeyed his nod, but now no one takes the least notice of his orders.

How wretched have I been, O Lord! in having, for so many years, gone after the vanities of the world, and left Thee, my sovereign good! But from this day forward I desire to possess Thee as my only treasure, as the only love of my soul.

3. *Dust and ashes, why are you proud?*[1] Man, says the Almighty, seest thou not that in a short time thou wilt become dust and ashes? and on what dost thou fix thy thoughts and affections? Reflect that death will soon rob thee of everything, and separate thee from the whole world. And if, when thou givest in thy accounts, thou be found wanting, what will become of thee for eternity?

I give Thee thanks, my Lord and my God. Thou speakest thus to me, because thou desirest to save me. Let Thy mercies now prevail. Thou hast promised to pardon such as repent of their offences against Thee.

[1] "Quid superbit terra et cinis?"—*Ecclus.* x. 9.

From the bottom of my heart do I repent: grant me therefore pardon. Thou hast promised to love those who love Thee: above all things do I now love Thee; wherefore do Thou love me also, and hate me not any more, as I have deserved. O Mary, my advocate, in thy protection is my hope.

MEDITATION XXVIII.

The Number of our Sins.

1. It is the opinion of St. Basil, St. Jerome, St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, and others, that as God has determined for each one the number of talents, the goods of fortune, and the number of days to be bestowed upon him, so he has also determined for each one the number of sins to be pardoned him, which being completed, God will pour out his chastisements upon him and pardon him no more. Each one, says St. Augustine, is patiently borne with by Almighty God for a certain time; but when this is over, there is then no longer any more pardon for him.[1]

I am aware, O God! that I have hitherto abused Thy patience too much; but I know that Thou hast not yet abandoned me, because I am sorry for my sins, and this sorrow is a sign that Thou still lovest me. O my God! I desire never more to displease Thee; for pity's sake do not abandon me.

2. *The Lord patiently expecteth, that when the day of judgment shall come, He may punish them in the fulness of their sins.*[2] Although God has patience and waits for the sinner, yet, when the day arrives for the measure of his sins

[1] "Tamdiu unumquemque a Dei patientia sustentari, quamdiu nondum finem repleverit; quo consummato, nullam illi veniam reservari." —*De Vita Christ.* c. 3.

[2] "Dominus patienter exspectat, ut eas (nationes), cum judicii dies advenerit, in plenitudine peccatorum puniat."—2 *Mach.* vi. 14.

to be filled up he will wait for him no longer, but chastise him.

O Lord! wait yet for me a little while, do not yet abandon me; I hope with the assistance of Thy grace never to offend Thee more, nor to excite Thy anger against me. I am sorry, O my sovereign good! for having offended Thee, and I protest that I will never more betray Thee. I now esteem Thy friendship more than all the goods of the whole world.

3. We commit sins, and we take no notice of the load of guilt which we are accumulating; but let us tremble lest what happened to King Baltassar befall us also: *Thou art weighed in the balance, and art found wanting.*[1] The devil may tell you that it matters not whether it be ten or eleven sins. But no, that wicked enemy deceives you; the sin which he is tempting you to commit will increase the load of your guilt; it may decide the balance of divine justice against you, and you may be condemned for it to the torments of hell. If, Christian brother, you live not in fear that God will not show you mercy, should you add one more mortal sin to those which you have already committed; if you tremble not at the thought of this, you are in great danger of being lost.

No, my God: Thou hast borne with me too long; I will never more abuse Thy bountiful goodness. I thank Thee for having waited for me until now. I have forfeited Thy love too often; but I hope never more to lose Thee. Since Thou hast not yet abandoned me, enable me to find Thee again. I love Thee, O my God! and I am sorry from the bottom of my heart for having ever turned my back upon Thee. No, I desire never more to lose Thee. Assist me with Thy grace. And thou, my queen and my mother, Mary, help me by thy holy intercession.

[1] "Appensus es in statera, et inventus es minus habens."—*Dan.* v. 27.

MEDITATION XXIX.

The Folly of Living as Enemies of God.

1. Sinners call the saints who, in this life, fly from honors, riches, and the pleasures of sense, and embrace poverty, contempt, and mortification, fools. But at the day of final retribution they will confess that they themselves have been fools in judging the lives of the saints to be folly: *We fools esteemed their life madness.*[1] And what greater folly can there be than to live without God?—which is to live a miserable life in this world, to be succeeded by a still more miserable one in hell.

No, I will not wait till the last day to confess my folly; I now confess it: how great has it been in offending Thee, my sovereign good! *Father, I am not worthy to be called Thy son.*[2] Father, I am not worthy to receive Thy forgiveness, but I hope for it through the blood which Thou hast shed for my sake. My Jesus, I am sorry for having despised Thee, I love Thee above all things.

2. Unhappy sinners! blinded by their sins, they lose all judgment. What would be said of a man who should sell a kingdom for the smallest coin? And what should be said of him who, for a momentary pleasure, a vapor, a caprice, sells heaven and the grace of God? They think only of this life, which will shortly end, and in the mean time deserve hell for that life which will never end. O my God! permit me not to become any more so blind as to prefer, as I have hitherto done, my own unlawful gratifications before Thee, and for the sake of them to despise Thee, my sovereign good! I now detest them, and love Thee above all things.

[1] "Nos insensati vitam illorum æstimabamus insaniam."—*Wis.* v. 4.

[2] "Pater . . . non sum dignus vocari filius tuus."—*Luke,* xv. 19.

3. Miserable worldlings! the time will come when they will bewail their folly; but when?—when there will be no longer anything to prevent their eternal ruin. Then will they say, *What hath pride profited us? or what advantage hath the boasting of riches brought us? All those things are passed away like a shadow.*[1] Behold, they will exclaim, how all our delights have passed away like a shadow, and nothing remains to us now but suffering and eternal lamentation!

Dear Jesus! have pity on me. I had forgotten Thee, but Thou didst not forget me. I love Thee with my whole soul, and I detest above all evil whatever sins I have committed against Thee. Pardon me, O God! and remember not my offences against Thee. And since Thou knowest my weakness, do not abandon me; give me strength to overcome all things to please Thee. O Mary, Mother of God! in thee do I place my hopes.

MEDITATION XXX.

The Sacred Wounds of Jesus.

1. St. Bonaventure says that the wounds of Jesus wound the hardest hearts and inflame the coldest souls.[2] And in truth, how can we believe that God permitted himself to be buffeted, scourged, crowned with thorns, and finally put to death for the love of us, and yet not love him? St. Francis of Assisi frequently bewailed the ingratitude of men as he passed along the country, saying, "Love is not loved, love is not loved."

Behold, O my Jesus! I am one of those who are thus ungrateful, who have been so many years in the world and have not loved Thee. And shall I, my Redeemer,

[1] "Quid nobis profuit superbia? aut divitiarum jactantia quid contulit nobis? Transierunt omnia illa tanquam umbra."—*Wis.* v. 8.

[2] "Vulnera corda saxea vulnerantia, et mentes congelatas inflammantia."—*Stim. div. am.* p. i. c. 1.

remain forever such? No, I will love Thee until death, and will give myself wholly to Thee; mercifully accept of me and help me.

2. The Church, when she shows us Jesus Christ crucified, exclaims: "His whole figure breathes forth love; his head bowed down, his arms extended, his side opened."[1] She cries out: Behold, O man! behold thy God, who has died for thy love; see how his arms are extended to embrace thee, his head bowed down to give thee the kiss of peace, his side opened to give thee access to his heart, if thou wilt but love him.

Assuredly I will love Thee, my treasure, my love, and my all. And whom shall I love, if I love not God who has died for me?

3. *The charity of Christ*, saith the Apostle, *presseth us*.[2] Ah! my Redeemer, Thou hast died for the love of men; yet men do not love Thee, because they live unmindful of the death which Thou hast suffered for them. Did they bear it in mind, how could they live without loving Thee? "Knowing," says St. Francis de Sales, "that Jesus being really God, has so loved us as to suffer the death of the cross for us, do we not on this account feel our hearts, as it were, in a press, in which they are forcibly held, and love expressed from them by a kind of violence, which is the more powerful as it is the more amiable?" And this is what St. Paul says in these words: *The charity of Christ presseth us*;[3] the love of Jesus Christ forces us to love him.

Ah! my beloved Saviour, heretofore I have despised Thee, but now I esteem and love Thee more than my own life; nothing afflicts me so much as the remem-

[1] "Omnis figura ejus amorem spirat, et ad redamandum provocat, caput inclinatum, manus expansæ, pectus apertum."—*Off. Dol. B. V. resp.* I.

[2] "Charitas Christi urget nos."—2 *Cor.* v. 14.

[3] Charitas Christi urget nos.

brance of the many offences I have committed against Thee. Pardon me, O Jesus! and draw my whole heart to Thyself, that so I may not desire, nor seek, nor sigh after any other beside Thee. O Mary, my mother! help me to love Jesus.

MEDITATION XXXI.

The Great Affair of Salvation.

1. The affair of our eternal salvation is of all affairs the most important. But how comes it that men use all diligence to succeed in the affairs of this world, leave no means untried to obtain a desirable situation, to gain a lawsuit, or to bring about a marriage, reject no counsels, neglect no measures by which to secure their object, neither eat nor sleep, and yet do nothing to gain eternal salvation,—nothing to gain it, but everything to forfeit it, as though hell, heaven, and eternity were not articles of faith, but only fables and lies?

O God! assist me by Thy divine light; suffer me not to be any longer blinded, as I hitherto have been.

2. If an accident happen to a house, what is not immediately done to repair it? If a jewel be lost, what is not done to recover it? The soul is lost, the grace of God is lost, and men sleep and smile! We attend most carefully to our temporal welfare, and almost entirely neglect our eternal salvation! We call those happy who have renounced all things for God; why then are we so much attached to earthly things?

O Jesus! Thou hast so much desired my salvation as to shed Thy blood and lay down Thy life to secure it; and I have been so indifferent to the preservation of Thy grace as to renounce and forfeit it for mere nothing! I am sorry, O Lord! for having thus dishonored Thee. I will renounce all things to attend only to Thy love, my God, who art most worthy of all love.

3. The Son of God gives his life to save our souls; the devil is most diligent in his endeavors to bring them to eternal ruin: and do we take no care of them? St. Philip Neri convicts that man of the height of folly who is inattentive to the salvation of his soul. Let us arouse our faith: it is certain that, after this short life, another life awaits us, which will be either eternally happy or eternally miserable. God has given us to choose which we will. *Before man is life and death . . . that which he shall choose shall be given him.*[1] Ah! let us make such a choice now as we shall not have to repent of all eternity.

O God! make me sensible of the great wrong I have done Thee in offending Thee and renouncing Thee for the love of creatures. I am sorry with my whole heart for having despised Thee, my sovereign good; do not reject me now that I return to Thee. I love Thee above all things, and for the future I will lose all things rather than forfeit Thy grace. Through the love which Thou hast shown me in dying for me, succor me with Thy help, and do not abandon me. O Mary, Mother of God! be thou my advocate.

MEDITATION XXXII

The Frequent Thought of Death.

1. Men who are attached to this world endeavor to banish the thoughts of death from their minds, as though, by avoiding the remembrance of death, they could avoid death itself. But no; by banishing the thoughts of death from their minds, they expose themselves to greater danger of making an evil end. There is no alternative: sooner or later we must die; and what is still more, we can die but once; and if once we be lost, we shall be lost forever.

[1] "Ante hominem vita et mors, bonum et malum; quod placuerit ei, dabitur illi."—*Ecclus.* xv. 18.

My God, I give Thee thanks for having enlightened me. I have already lost too many years in offending Thee; but I will now spend the remainder of my life entirely in Thy service. Command me what Thou willest, for I desire to please Thee in all things.

2. Holy anchorets, who formerly fled from the world into deserts in order to secure for themselves a happy death, took nothing with them but some spiritual book and a skull, by the sight of which they might continually keep up in their minds the remembrance of their last end. They meditated upon it, saying: "As the bones of him to whom this skull belonged, so will the bones of my body one day be: and my soul—who knows where that shall dwell?" And thus they endeavored to gain not the goods of this life, but of that life which will never end.

I give Thee thanks, O Lord! for not having suffered me to die when I was in the state of sin. I am sorry for having offended Thee, and hope, through Thy precious blood, for mercy and pardon. I desire, O Jesus! to renounce all things, and to do my utmost to please Thee.

3. A certain hermit, being at the point of death, was observed to smile, and being asked why he was so cheerful, answered: "I have always kept death before my eyes, and hence, now that it is come, it does not alarm me." The approach of death, therefore, is terrible to those only who have thought of nothing but of gratifying themselves during their lifetime, and have never thought of their last end; but it is not terrible to those who, by frequently thinking upon it, have learned to despise all earthly goods, and to love nothing but God.

O my Saviour! I perceive that death is already drawing near to me, and as yet I have done nothing for Thee, who didst die for me. No, before death, I will, O God! love Thee, who art worthy of infinite love. I

have hitherto dishonored Thee by the offences which I have committed against Thee; but I am sorry for them with my whole heart. For the future I will honor Thee, by loving Thee to the utmost of my power. Give me light and strength to do so. Thou wouldst have me be wholly Thine, and such do I desire to be. Help me by Thy grace; in Thee do I confide. And in thee also do I confide, O Mary, my Mother, and my hope!

MEDITATION XXXIII.

The Turning away from God by Sin.

1. St. Augustine and St. Thomas define mortal sin to be *a turning away from God:* that is, the turning of one's back upon God, leaving the Creator for the sake of the creature. What punishment would that subject deserve who, while his king was giving him a command, contemptuously turned his back upon him to go and transgress his orders? This is what the sinner does; and this is punished in hell with the pain of loss, that is, the loss of God, a punishment richly deserved by him who in this life turns his back upon his sovereign good.

Alas! my God, I have frequently turned my back upon Thee; but I see that Thou hast not yet abandoned me; I see that Thou approachest me, and inviting me to repentance, dost offer me Thy pardon. I am sorry above every evil for having offended Thee, do Thou have pity on me.

2. *Thou hast forsaken Me, saith the Lord, thou hast gone backward.*[1] God complains and says, Ungrateful soul, thou hast forsaken me! I should never have forsaken thee hadst thou not first turned thy back upon me: *thou hast gone backward.*[2] O God, with what consternation

[1] "Tu reliquisti me, dicit Dominus; retrorsum abiisti."—*Jer.* xv. 6.
[2] Retrorsum abiisti.

will these words fill the soul of the sinner when he stands to be judged before Thy divine tribunal!

Thou makest me hear them now, O my Saviour! not to condemn me, but to bring me to sorrow for the offences I have committed against Thee. Yes, O Jesus! I sincerely repent of all the displeasure which I have given Thee. For my own miserable gratifications I have forsaken Thee, my God, my sovereign, infinite good! But behold me a penitent returned to Thee; and reject me not.

3. *Why will you die, O house of Israel? return ye and live.*[1] I have died, says Jesus Christ, for the salvation of your souls, and why will you condemn them by your sins to eternal death? Return to me, and you will recover the life of my grace.

O Jesus! I should not dare to crave Thy pardon, did I not know that Thou hast died to obtain my forgiveness. Alas! how often have I despised Thy grace and Thy love! O that I had died rather than ever offered Thee so great an injury! But Thou, who didst come near to me even when I offended Thee, wilt not now reject me, when I love Thee and seek no other but Thee. *My God and my all*, suffer me not any more to be ungrateful to Thee. Mary, Queen and Mother, obtain for me the grace of holy perseverance.

MEDITATION XXXIV.

The Mercy of God in Calling Sinners to Repentance.

1. *The Lord called to Adam, and said to him, Where art thou?*[2] These are the words of a father, says a pious author, going in quest of his lost son. Oh the immense compassion of our God! Adam sins, he turns his back

[1] "Quare moriemini, domus Israel? . . . Revertimini, et vivite." —*Ezek.* xviii. 31.

[2] "Adam . . . ubi es?"—*Gen.* iii. 9.

upon God; and yet God does not abandon him, but follows him and calls after him, "Adam, where art thou?" Thus, my soul, has God frequently done towards thee; thou hadst forsaken him by sin; but he did not hesitate to approach thee, and to call upon thee by many interior lights, by remorse of conscience, and by his holy inspirations; all of which were the effects of his compassion and love.

O God of mercy, O God of love! how could I have so grievously offended Thee, how could I have been so ungrateful to Thee!

2. As a father when he beholds his son hastening to cast himself down from the brink of a precipice, presses forward towards him, and with tears endeavors to withhold him from destruction; so, my God, hast Thou done towards me. I was already hastening by my sins to precipitate myself into hell, and Thou didst hold me back. I am now sensible, O Lord! of the love which Thou hast shown me, and I hope to sing forever in heaven the praises of Thy mercy: *The mercies of the Lord I will sing forever.*[1] I know, O Jesus! that Thou desirest my salvation; but I do not know whether Thou hast yet pardoned me. Oh! give me intense sorrow for my sins, give me an ardent love for Thee, as signs of Thy merciful forgiveness.

3. O my Saviour! how can I doubt of receiving Thy pardon, when Thou Thyself dost offer it to me, and art ready to receive me with open arms on my return to Thee? Wherefore I do return to Thee, sorrowing and overpowered at the consideration that after all my offences against Thee, Thou indeed still lovest me. Oh that I had never displeased Thee, my sovereign good! how much am I grieved for having done so! Pardon me, O Jesus! I will never more offend Thee. But I shall not

[1] "Misericordias Domini in æternum cantabo."—*Ps.* lxxxviii. 1.

be able to rest satisfied with Thy forgiveness only: give me also a great love for Thee. Having so often deserved to burn in the fire of hell, I now desire to burn in the fire of Thy holy love. I love Thee, who art my only love, my life, my treasure, my all. O Mary, my protectress! pray for me, that I may continue faithful to God until the end of my life.

MEDITATION XXXV.

The Soul's Appearance at the Tribunal of God.

1. When criminals are presented before their judges, though they fear and tremble, yet flatter themselves that either their crimes will not be proved against them, or that their judges will remit in part the punishments which they have deserved. O God! how great will be the horror of a guilty soul when presented before Jesus Christ, from whom nothing will be hidden, and who will judge it with the utmost severity! *I am the Judge and the Witness*,[1] will he then say: "I am thy Judge, and I am witness of all the offences thou hast committed against me."

O my Jesus! I deserved to hear this from Thy mouth, had the hour of my judgment arrived. But now Thou art pleased to assure me, that if I will repent of my sins, Thou wilt no longer remember them: *I will not remember all his iniquities*.[2]

2. It is the opinion of divines, that in the same place in which the soul is separated from the body it will be judged, and its lot decided either for eternal life or eternal death. But should the soul unhappily depart from the body in sin, what will it be able to say when Jesus Christ reminds it of his abused mercies, of the years he granted it, of the calls by which he invited it,

[1] "Ego sum judex et testis."—*Jer.* xxix. 23.

[2] "Omnium iniquitatum . . . non recordabor."—*Ezek.* xviii. 22.

and of the many other means which he afforded it of securing its salvation?

Jesus, my Redeemer! Thou who condemnest obstinate sinners, dost not condemn those who love Thee and who are sorry for having offended Thee. I am a sinner, but I love Thee more than myself, and I am sorry above every evil for having displeased Thee; oh, do Thou pardon me before the time comes when Thou wilt judge me!

3. *At what hour you think not, the Son of man will come.*[1]

When, therefore, O my Jesus and my Judge! Thou shalt judge me, after my death, Thy wounds will be a terror to me, reproaching me with my ingratitude for the love which Thou hast shown me in suffering and dying for me, but now they encourage me and give me confidence to hope for pardon from Thee, my Redeemer, who for the love of me, and that Thou mayest not have to condemn me, didst suffer Thyself to be tormented and crucified. *We therefore pray Thee, help Thy servants whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy precious blood.*[2] O my Jesus! have pity on me, who am one of those sheep for whom Thou didst shed Thy sacred blood. If hitherto I have despised Thee, I now esteem and love Thee above all things. Make known to me the means by which I may be saved, and strengthen me to fulfil Thy holy will. I will no longer abuse Thy goodness. Thou hast placed me under too many obligations to Thee; I will no longer suffer myself to live at a distance from Thee and deprived of Thy love. Mary, Mother of mercy, have compassion on me.

[1] "Qua hora non putatis, Filius hominis veniet."—*Luke*, xii. 40.

[2] Te ergo quæsumus, tuis famulis subveni, quos pretioso sanguine redemisti.

MEDITATION XXXVI.

The Unhappy Life of the Sinner.

1. *There is no peace for the wicked.*[1] The devil deceives poor sinners by making them believe that if they gratify their sensual desires, revenge themselves, or take what belongs to another, they will gain satisfaction and obtain peace: but no, for the reverse will always be their portion; the soul after sin becomes more than ever disquieted and afflicted. The brutes alone, who are created for the earth, can gain contentment from the enjoyments of the earth; but man, who is created to enjoy God, cannot derive satisfaction from any or all of God's creatures; his only source of happiness is God.

O my God! what, of all the delights by which I have offended Thee, now remains but bitterness and sorrow to torment me? I do not regret the bitterness which they now cause me; but only the displeasure which they have given Thee, who hast so much loved me.

2. *The wicked are like the raging sea, which cannot rest.*[2] What is a soul in disgrace with God but a tempestuous sea, always in agitation?—one wave rises and another succeeds, and all are waves of pain and anguish. No one in the world can have all things according to his will. He who loves God, when adversity comes resigns himself to God's blessed will, and thus secures peace to his soul; but how can the sinner, if he is an enemy of God, pacify himself by resignation to God's holy appointments? Besides, sin always brings with it the dread of divine vengeance. *The wicked man fleeth, when no man pursueth.*[3] Yes, for his own sin followeth after

[1] "Non est pax impiis, dicit Dominus."—*Isa.* xlviii. 22.

[2] "Impii quasi mare fervens, quod quiescere non potest."—*Isa.* lvii. 20.

[3] "Fugit impius, nemine persequente."—*Prov.* xxviii. 1.

him, and by the remorse with which it preys upon his soul, makes him suffer an anticipated hell.

O my Lord and my God! I am exceedingly sorry for having forsaken Thee; do Thou forgive me, and suffer me not to lose Thee any more.

3. *Delight in the Lord, and He will give thee the requests of thy heart.*[1] Man, whither goest thou in search of content? Seek after God, and he will satisfy all the desires of thy soul. "Seek," says St. Augustine, "the one only good, in whom are all other goods."[2] Behold a St. Francis, who when stripped of all worldly goods, being still united with God, found in this a heaven even here upon earth, and could not often enough exclaim, "My God! my God and my all!"[3] Happy the soul that leaves all for God, for in him it finds all.

O Jesus! instead of abandoning me, as I have deserved, Thou offerest me pardon, and callest me to Thy love. Behold, I return to Thee overwhelmed with sorrow for the evil which I have done, and deeply affected at seeing that even still Thou lovest me after the many offences I have committed against Thee. Thou lovest me, and I also love Thee and love Thee more than myself. Receive me into Thy favor, and do with me what Thou pleasest. only do not deprive me of Thy love. Mary, Mother, have pity on me.

MEDITATION XXXVII.

The Love of Jesus Crucified.

1. Well might our loving Redeemer declare that he came upon the earth to enkindle divine love, and that he desired nothing else but to see this sacred fire burn-

[1] "Delectare in Domino, et dabit tibi petitiones cordis tui."—*Ps.* xxxvi. 4.

[2] "Ama unum bonum, in quo sunt omnia bona."—*Man.* c. 34.

[3] Deus meus, Deus meus, et omnia.

ing in our hearts: *I am come to cast fire upon the earth: and what will I but that it be kindled?*[1] And, in fact, how many happy souls have been so inflamed with the thoughts of a crucified God as to forsake all things else to give themselves entirely to his holy love! What more could Jesus Christ have done to induce us to love him than to die in torments upon a cross to prove how much he loved us? With good reason did St. Francis of Paula, when he contemplated with admiration Jesus crucified, exclaim in an ecstasy of love, "O charity! charity! charity!"

2. But alas, how generally do men live forgetful of so loving a God! If the vilest of men—if a slave had done for me what Jesus Christ has done and suffered for me, how should I be able to live without loving him? O God! who is he that hangs upon the cross?—the same that created me and that now dies for me. That cross, those thorns, those nails, exclaim, and with a still louder voice those wounds cry out and demand our love.

3. "May I die," said St. Francis of Assisi, "for the love of Thy love, O Jesus! who hast died for the love of my love." To make an adequate return for the love of God in dying for us would require another God to die for him. It would be but little, it would be nothing, were each of us to give a thousand lives in return for the love of Jesus Christ. But Jesus is satisfied with our giving him our hearts; nevertheless he is not satisfied unless we give them entirely to him. For this end, says the Apostle, did he die, that he might have the entire dominion of our hearts: *That He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.*[2]

My beloved Redeemer, how can I ever more forget

[1] "Ignem veni mittere in terram; et quid volo, nisi ut accendatur?" —*Luke*, xii. 49.

[2] "In hoc enim Christus mortuus est et resurrexit, ut et mortuorum et vivorum dominetur."—*Rom.* xiv. 9.

Thee? how can I love anything else, after having seen Thee die in torments on an infamous gibbet to satisfy for my sins? and how can I reflect that my sins have reduced Thee to this, and not die with grief at the remembrance of the offences I have committed against Thee? Jesus, help me; I desire nothing but Thee; help me and love me. O Mary, my hope! assist me by thy prayers.

MEDITATION XXXVIII.

The Will of God to Save All.

1. The Apostle St. Paul teaches us that God willeth the salvation of all: *He will have all men to be saved;*[1] and St. Peter saith: *the Lord dealeth patiently for your sake, not willing that any should perish, but that all should return to penance.*[2] For this end the Son of God came down from heaven, and was made man, and spent thirty-three years in labors and sufferings, and finally shed his blood and laid down his life for our salvation; and shall we forfeit our salvation?

Thou, my Saviour, didst spend Thy whole life in securing my salvation, and in what have I spent so many years of my life? What fruit hast Thou hitherto reaped from me? I have deserved to be cut off and cast into hell. But Thou *desirest not the death of the sinner, but that he be converted and live.*[3] Yes, O God! I leave all and turn myself to Thee. I love Thee, and because I love Thee I am sorry for having offended Thee. Accept of me, and suffer me not to forsake Thee any more.

2. How much did the saints do to secure their eternal salvation! How many nobles and kings have forsaken

[1] "Omnes homines vult salvos fieri."—1 *Tim.* ii. 4.

[2] "Patienter agit, nolens aliquos perire, sed omnes ad pœnitentiam reverti."—2 *Peter,* iii. 9.

[3] "Nolo mortem impii, sed ut convertatur . . . et vivat."—*Ezek.* xxxiii. 11.

their kingdoms and estates, and shut themselves up in cloisters! How many young persons have forsaken their country and friends, and have dwelt in caves and deserts! And how many martyrs have laid down their lives under the most cruel tortures! And why?—to save their souls. And what have we done?

Woe to me, who, although I know that death is near at hand, yet think not of it! No, my God, I will no longer live at a distance from Thee. Why do I delay? Is it that death may overtake me in the miserable state in which I now am? No, my God, do Thou assist me to prepare for death.

3. O God, how many graces has my Saviour bestowed on me to enable me to save my soul! He has caused me to be born in the bosom of the true Church; he has many times pardoned me my transgressions; he has favored me with many lights in sermons, in prayers, in meditations, in Communions, and spiritual exercises; and often has he called me to his love. In a word, how many means of salvation has he granted me which he has not granted others!

And yet, O God! when shall I detach myself from the world and give myself entirely to Thee? Behold me, O Jesus! I will no longer resist. Thou hast obliged me to love Thee. I desire to be wholly Thine: do Thou accept of me, and disdain not the love of a sinner who has hitherto so much despised Thee. I love Thee, my God, my love, and my all; have pity on me, O Mary!—thou art my hope.

MEDITATION XXXIX.

The Near Approach of Death.

1. Every one knows that he must certainly die; yet many delude themselves by imagining that death is at so immense a distance from them that it will scarcely

ever reach them. No; our life is indeed short, and death is very near us. The days of our sojourning here are few, and perhaps much fewer than we imagine. What else is our life but a light vapor, which is driven away and disappears with the wind? a blade of grass which is dried up in the heat of the sun?

O God! Thou wouldst not suffer death to overtake me when I was under Thy displeasure, because Thou didst love me and didst desire my salvation; wherefore I will also love Thee.

2. *My days*, said holy Job, *have been swifter than a post.*[1] Death is hasting towards us more rapidly than a post, and we at every step, and every breath and moment, are drawing nearer and nearer to death. At the time of our death how shall we wish for one day or one hour of the many we now squander away to no purpose!

Ah! Lord, if death were now announced to me, what should I find that I have done for Thee? Alas! come to my assistance; let me not die ungrateful to Thee as I hitherto have been. Grant me true sorrow for my sins, the gift of Thy love, and holy perseverance.

3. Death hastens towards us; wherefore we must also hasten to do that which is good, and to put our accounts in order against the day of its arrival. When death comes it precludes all remedies for what has been done amiss. How many are now in hell who thought of amending their lives at some future period, but were prevented by death and consigned to eternal torments!

My dear Redeemer, I will no longer resist Thy calls. Thou offerest me pardon, and I am desirous of obtaining it; I pray for it, and hope for it, through that death which Thou, my Jesus, hast suffered that Thou mayest be able to impart it to me. I am sorry, O infinite goodness, for having offended Thee. Thou, my Jesus, hast died for me, and I have postponed Thy friendship to my

[1] "Dies mei velociores fuerunt cursore."—*Job*, ix. 25.

own wretched inclinations. For the future I hope with Thy assistance always to love Thee. I love Thee, O God! I love Thee. Thou art now and shalt be forever my only good, my only love. Mary, mother of God, watch over me and take pity on me.

MEDITATION XL.

God Abandons the Sinner in his Sins.

1. It is a grievous chastisement of God, when he cuts the sinner off in his sins; but still worse is that whereby he abandons him and suffers him to add sin upon sin. "No punishment is so great," says Bellarmin, "as when sin is made the punishment of sin."[1]

I give Thee thanks, therefore, O Jesus! for not having suffered me to die in my sins; and I give Thee still greater thanks for not having abandoned me in my sins. And oh! into how much deeper an abyss of sin should I have fallen if Thou hadst not supported me. Continue, O Lord! to keep me from sin and do not forsake me.

2. *I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be wasted.*[2] When the master cuts down the fence of his vineyard, and leaves it open for any one to enter therein, it is a sign that he considers it not worth cultivating, and abandons it. In like manner does God proceed when he forsakes a sinful soul: he takes away from it the hedge of his holy fear, of his light, and of his voice; and hence the soul being blinded and enslaved by its vices, which overpower it, despises everything, the grace of God, heaven, admonitions, and censures; it thinks lightly even of its own damnation, and thus en-

[1] "Nulla pœna gravior, quam cum peccatum est pœna peccati."—*In Ps.* lxviii.

[2] "Auferam sepem ejus, et erit in direptionem."—*Isa.* v. 5.

veloped in darkness is certain to be lost forever. *The wicked man, when he is come into the depths of sins, contemneth.*[1]

This have I deserved, O God! for having so often despised Thy light and Thy calls. But I see that Thou hast not yet abandoned me. I love Thee, O my God! and in Thee do I place all my hopes.

3. *We would have cured Babylon, but she is not healed; let us forsake her.*[2] The physician visits the sick man, prescribes remedies for him, and makes him sensible of his maladies; but when he sees that his patient does not obey him, and on this account grows worse and worse, he takes leave of him and forsakes him. It is thus that God deals with obstinate sinners: after a certain time he speaks but little to them; and only assists them with grace just sufficient to enable them to save their souls; but they will not save them. The darkness of their minds, the hardness of their hearts, and the inveteracy of their wicked habits, render it morally impossible for them to gain salvation.

But, O God! since Thou still callest me to repentance, Thou hast not yet abandoned me; I desire never more to forsake Thee. I love Thee, O infinite goodness! and because I love Thee I am exceedingly sorry for having offended Thee. I love Thee, and I hope through Thy blood to love Thee forever. Suffer me not to be any more separated from Thee. Holy Mary, Virgin of virgins, become my advocate.

MEDITATION XLI.

The Examination at the Particular Judgment.

1. In the same moment and in the same place in which the soul departs from the body, the divine tribu-

[1] "Impius, cum in profundum venerit peccatorum, contemnit."—*Prov.* xviii. 3.

[2] "Curavimus Babylonem, et non est sanata; derelinquamus."—*Jer.* li. 9.

nal is erected, the indictment read, and the sentence pronounced by the sovereign judge. *Whom he foreknew*, says St. Paul, *he also predestinated to be made conformable to his Son . . . them he also justified.*[1] In order, therefore, to be made worthy of glory, our lives must be made conformable to the life of Jesus Christ. Hence it is that St. Peter says that, in the day of judgment, *the just man shall scarcely be saved.*[2]

O Jesus, my Saviour and my judge! what will become of me, since my whole life has hitherto been the reverse of Thine? But Thy Passion is my hope. I am a sinner, but Thou canst make me a saint, and this I hope for from Thy bounty.

2. The Venerable Father Louis da Ponte, reflecting on the account which he should have to give of his whole life at the time of his death, trembled to such a degree as to make the whole room shake. And how ought we to tremble at the thought of this account! and how diligent ought we to be in seeking the Lord whilst we may find him! At the time of death it will be difficult to find him, if we are overtaken in our sins; but now we may easily find him by repentance and love.[3]

Yes, my God, I am sorry above every evil for having despised Thee; and I now esteem and love Thee above every good.

3. *What shall I do*, said holy Job, *when God shall rise to judge? and when He shall examine, what shall I answer Him?*[4] And what shall I answer him, if, after so many mercies, so many calls, still I resist him?

[1] "Quos præscivit et prædestinavit conformes fieri imaginis Filii sui . . . illos et glorificavit."—*Rom.* viii. 29.

[2] "Justus vix salvabitur."—1 *Peter*, iv. 18.

[3] "Quærite Dominum, dum inveniri potest."—*Isa.* lv. 6.

[4] "Quid faciam, cum surrexerit ad judicandum Deus? Et cum quæsierit, quid respondebo illi?"—*Job*, xxxi. 14.

No, Lord, I will no longer resist Thee, I will no longer be ungrateful to Thee. I have committed many offences and disloyalties against Thee, but Thou hast shed Thy blood to save me from my sins. "Help Thy servant whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy precious blood."[1] I am sorry, my sovereign good, for having offended Thee, and I love Thee with my whole heart; have pity on me. And O Mary, my Mother, do not abandon me!

MEDITATION XLII.

The Journey to Eternity.

1. *Man shall go into the house of his eternity.*[2] This earth is not our true country; we are only passing through it on our way to eternity. The land in which I dwell, the house which I inhabit, are not mine. In a short time, and when I least expect it, I must leave them. The house which will contain my body until the day of general judgment will be the grave, and the house of my soul will be eternity, in heaven if I be saved, in hell if I be lost. Foolish indeed, then, should I be were I to place my affections on things which I must soon leave. I will endeavor to procure for myself a happy mansion in which I may dwell forever.

2. *Man shall go into the house of his eternity.* It is said "he shall go," to give us to understand that each one shall go, in another life, into that house which he himself has chosen: "he shall go," he shall not be conducted, but shall go thither of his own free will.—Faith teaches us that, in the next life, there are two habitations: one is a palace of delights, where all are happy forever, and this is paradise; the other is a prison of excruciating torments, where all are forever miserable, and this is hell. Choose, my soul, to which of the two thou wilt go.

[1] Tuis famulis subveni, quos pretioso sanguine redemisti.

[2] "Ibit homo in domum æternitatis suæ."—*Eccles.* xii. 5.

If thou desirest heaven, thou must walk in the way which leads to heaven; if thou shouldst walk in the way which leads to hell, thou wilt one day unhappily find thyself there.

Jesus, enlighten me; Jesus, strengthen me. Suffer me not to be separated from Thee.

3. *Man shall go into the house of his eternity.* If then I be saved and enter into the house of bliss, I shall there be happy forever; but if I be lost and enter into the house of woe, I shall be miserable forever. If, therefore, I would be saved, I must keep eternity always before my eyes. He who frequently meditates upon eternity does not become attached to the goods of this world, and thus secures his salvation. I will endeavor, therefore, so to regulate all my actions that they may be so many steps towards a happy eternity.

O God! I believe in life eternal. Henceforth I will live only for Thee; hitherto I have lived for myself and have lost Thee, my sovereign good. I will never more lose Thee; but will forever serve and love Thee. Assist me, O Jesus! and do not abandon me. Mary, my Mother, protect me.

MEDITATION XLIII.

Jesus, the Man of Sorrows.

1. The prophet Isaias calls our Blessed Redeemer *a man of sorrows;*[1] and such he was, for his whole life was a life of sorrows. He took upon his own shoulders all our debts. It is true that as he was man and God, a single prayer from him would have been sufficient to make satisfaction for the sins of the whole world; but our Saviour would rigorously satisfy divine justice, and hence he chose for himself a life of contempt and suffering, being content for the love of man to be treated as

[1] "Virum dolorum."—*Isa.* liii. 3.

the last and the vilest of men, as the prophet Isaias had foreseen him: *We have seen Him . . . despised and the most abject of men.*[1]

O my despised Jesus! by the contempt which Thou didst endure Thou hast made satisfaction for the contempt with which I have treated Thee. Oh that I had died and had never offended Thee!

2. Who, my God, amongst the sons of men, was ever so afflicted and oppressed as our most loving Redeemer? Man, however much he may be afflicted in this world, enjoys from time to time relief and consolation. Thus does our compassionate God treat his ungrateful and rebellious creatures. But he would not thus treat his beloved Son; for the life of Jesus Christ in this world was not only a life of afflictions, but of continual afflictions from its commencement until death. Our Blessed Saviour was deprived of all consolation and of every kind of relief. In a word, he was born but to suffer and to be *the man of sorrows.*

O Jesus! how unhappy is he who does not love Thee, or who loves Thee but little, after Thou hast so loved us miserable worms who have offended Thee! Enable me from this day forward to love no other but Thee, who alone art worthy of being loved.

3. Again, men suffer afflictions, but it is only while they are suffering them, because they do not know those which are yet to come. But Jesus Christ, having, as God, a knowledge of all future things, suffered in every moment of his life, not only the pains which actually afflicted him, but all those also which were to come upon him, and especially the outrages of his most sorrowful Passion, having always before his eyes his scourging at the pillar, his crowning with thorns, his crucifixion and bitter death, with all the sorrows and desolation which accompanied it.

[1] "Vidimus eum . . despectum et novissimum virorum."—*Isa.* liii. 2.

And why, O Jesus! didst Thou suffer so much for me who have so grievously offended Thee? Accept of me now that I may love Thee, and that henceforward I may love no other but Thee. My love and my only good, accept of me and strengthen me. I am resolved to become holy, that I may please Thee alone. Thou desirest me to be all Thine, and such do I desire to be. Holy Mary, thou art my hope.

MEDITATION XLIV.

The Folly of Neglecting Salvation.

1. *What doth it profit a man*, saith our Lord, *if he gain the world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?* How many rich men, how many nobles, how many monarchs, are now in hell! What now remains to them of their riches and honors but remorse and rage, which prey upon their souls, and will continue to prey upon them for all eternity?

O my God! enlighten me and assist me. I hope nevermore to be deprived of Thy grace. Have pity on a sinner who desires to love Thee.

2. How comes it, writes Salvian, that men believe in death, judgment, hell, and eternity, and yet live without fearing them? Hell is believed, and yet how many go down thither! But, O God! while these truths are believed, they are not dwelt upon, and hence are so many souls lost.

Alas! I also have been of the number of those who have been guilty of such folly. Although I knew that by offending Thee I was forfeiting Thy friendship, and writing my own condemnation; yet I was not restrained from committing sin! "Cast me not away from Thy face." I am sensible of the evil I have done in despising Thee, my God, and am grieved for it with my whole soul. Oh, "cast me not away from Thy face."

3. And then? and then? Oh, what force had these two words with F. P. Francis Zazzera when repeated to him by St. Philip Neri, in order to induce him to renounce the world and give himself wholly to God!* *Oh that they would be wise, and would understand, and would provide for their latter end.*[1] Oh! if all persons would but think of death, in which everything must be relinquished; of judgment, in which an account must be given of our whole lives; of a happy or miserable eternity, which must be the lot of each one: if all did but provide for these last things of their lives, no one would be lost. The present only is thought of, and hence is eternal salvation lost.

I give Thee thanks, O God, for the patience with which Thou hast hitherto borne with me, and for the light which Thou now bestowest upon me. I see that although I forgot Thee, Thou didst not forget me. I am sorry, my sovereign good, for having turned my back upon Thee, and I am now resolved to give myself entirely to Thee. And why should I delay? That Thou mayest abandon me, and that death may find me as miserable and ungrateful as I have been even until now? No, my God, I will no more offend Thee, but will love

* The circumstance to which St. Alphonsus here refers is thus related by him in his sermon for Septuagesima Sunday:

"St. Philip Neri, speaking, one day, to a young man named Francis Zazzera, who expected to make his fortune in the world by his talents, said: 'Be of good heart, my son; you may make a great fortune, you may become an eminent lawyer, you may then be made a prelate, then perhaps a cardinal, and then, who knows, perhaps even Pope. And then? and then? 'Go,' continued the Saint, 'and reflect upon these two words.' The young man went his way, and after having meditated on the two words *and then? and then?* abandoned all his worldly prospects, and gave himself entirely to God. Leaving the world, he entered into the same congregation that St. Philip had founded, and *then* he died in the odor of sanctity."

[1] "Utinam saperent, et intelligerent, ac novissima providerent." —*Deut.* xxxii. 29.

Thee. I love Thee, O infinite goodness! Give me perseverance and Thy holy love; I ask for nothing more. Mary, refuge of sinners, intercede for me.

MEDITATION XLV.

The Moment of Death.

1. "O moment, on which depends eternity!"[1]—Oh! how much depends on the last moment of our lives, on our last breath! Either an eternity of delights, or an eternity of torments, a life of happiness, or a life of misery. What folly therefore must it be, for the sake of a wretched momentary pleasure in this life, to run the risk of making an evil end, and beginning a life of misery which will never terminate!

O God! what will become of me in the last moment of my life? O Jesus, who didst die for my salvation! suffer me not to be lost forever; suffer me not to lose Thee, my only good.

2. O God! how do those miserable criminals who are condemned to cast lots for their lives tremble when they throw the dice, upon the cast of which depends their life or death! Tell me, Christian, if you were in such a situation, how much you would give to be liberated from it? But faith teaches you that you will one day arrive at that last moment, on which will depend your eternal life or death. You will then say, "Alas! I must now be either happy forever with God, or in despair forever without him."

No, my God, I will not lose Thee; if I have hitherto forfeited Thy friendship, I am sorry for it, and sincerely repent of it; I will never lose Thee more.

3. Either we believe, or we do not believe.—And if we believe that there is an eternity, that we can die only

[1] O momentum, a quo pendet æternitas!

once, and that if we die ill, the consequences will be eternal, without the least hope of remedy; why do we not resolve to separate ourselves from all danger of being lost, and to use all the means in our power to secure for ourselves a happy death? No security can be too great when eternity is at stake. The days of our lives are so many favors from God, by which he allows us time to prepare our accounts against the arrival of death. Delay not, for you have no time to lose.

Behold me, O God! tell me what I must do to be saved, for I will do all that Thou requirest of me. I have turned my back upon Thee; and for this I am exceedingly sorry, and for having done so would willingly die of grief. Pardon me, O Lord! and suffer me not to forsake Thee any more. I love Thee above all things, and will never more cease to love Thee. Holy Mary, Virgin of virgins, obtain for me the grace of perseverance in virtue.

MEDITATION XLVI.

The Desire of God to Save Sinners.

1. It is indeed very surprising that man, a worm of the earth, should dare to offend his Creator and turn his back upon him, by despising his graces after God has so favored and loved him as to lay down his life to save him. But it is still more surprising that God, after having been thus despised by man, should seek after him, invite him to repentance and offer him his pardon, as though God stood in need of us and not we of him.

O Jesus! Thou seekest me, and I seek after Thee. Thou desirest me, and I desire only Thee.

2. *For Christ*, saith the Apostle, *we beseech you, be reconciled to God.*[1] "And does God," exclaims St. Chrysos-

[1] "Obsecramus pro Christo, reconciliamini Deo."—2 *Cor.* v. 20.

tom, "call thus upon sinners? And what does he ask of them? to be reconciled, and be in peace with him." [1]

My Redeemer, Jesus Christ, how couldst Thou have had so much love for me, who have so often offended Thee? I detest all my offences against Thee; give me still greater grief, still greater love, that I may deplore my sins, not so much on account of the punishments I have deserved by them, as for the injury I have offered to Thee, my God, who art infinitely good and amiable.

3. *What is man*, exclaims holy Job, *that thou shouldst magnify him? or why dost thou set thy heart upon him?* [2]

What good, O Lord! hast Thou ever derived from me? and what canst Thou expect from me, that Thou lovest me so much, and comest so near to me? Hast Thou then forgotten all the injuries and treasons which I have committed against Thee? But since Thou hast so much loved me, I, a miserable worm, must also love Thee, my Creator and my Redeemer. Yes, I do love Thee, my God; I love Thee with my whole heart, I love Thee more than myself, and because I love Thee I will do everything to please Thee.—Thou knowest that nothing is so grievous to me as the remembrance of my having so often despised Thy love. I hope for the future to be able to compensate by my love for the frequent displeasure which I have given Thee. Help me for the sake of that precious blood which Thou hast shed for me. Help me also, O holy Mary! for the love of thy Son who died for me.

MEDITATION XLVII.

The Sentence of Particular Judgment.

1. Oh! what joy will he experience who, departing out of this life in the grace of God, will, on being pre-

[1] "Ipse Christus vos obsecrat; quid autem obsecrat? reconciliamini Deo."—*In 2 Cor. hom.* 11.

[2] "Quid est homo, quia magnificas eum? aut quid apponis erga eum cor tuum?"—*Job*, vii. 17.

sented before Jesus Christ, behold him with a benignant countenance, be lovingly received by him, and hear from him those delightful words: *Well done, thou good and faithful servant: because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.*[1]

But, O Jesus! if I were now to be summoned to judgment before Thee, how could I hope that Thou wouldst call me a good and faithful servant, when I have hitherto been so bad and faithless towards Thee, changing my promises of fidelity into treasons? But I will be faithful to Thee for the future, and will sooner lose my life a thousand times than forfeit Thy grace. Do Thou give me strength to fulfil this my resolution.

2. On the other hand, what anguish, O Jesus! will that sinner experience, who, dying in sin, and being presented before Thee, beholds Thy wrathful countenance! The soul that departs this life in God's displeasure will first condemn itself, and will then hear from Jesus Christ that terrible sentence: *Depart from me, thou accursed, into everlasting fire.*[2]

How often, O Jesus, have I deserved to hear from Thee the same sentence when I have committed mortal sin! When death overtakes me, Thou wilt then be my judge; but now Thou art my Father and Redeemer, ready to pardon me, if I am sorry for having offended Thee. I am therefore sorry, from the bottom of my heart, for all my offences against Thee; and I am sorry, not so much on account of hell which I have deserved by them, as because by them I have grievously offended Thee, who hast loved me with an infinite love.

3. The soul goes forth and leaves the body, but it is

[1] "Euge, serve bone et fidelis; quia super pauca fuisti fidelis, super multa te constituam: intra in gaudium Domini tui."—*Matt.* xxv. 23.

[2] "Discede a me, maledicte, in ignem æternum."—*Matt.* xxv. 41.

for some time doubtful whether the person be alive or dead. While the bystanders are doubting, the soul has already entered eternity. The priest, satisfied at length that the man is dead, recites the prayer of the Church: "Come to his assistance, all ye saints of God: meet him, all ye angels of God: receive his soul and present it now before its Lord."[1] But of what avail will it be to the soul that has departed an enemy of God, and upon which sentence has already been passed, to call the saints and angels to its assistance?

O my good angel, ye saints, my holy advocates, St. Michael, St. Joseph, and you my holy protectress Mary! help me now whilst you have it in your power. And Thou, my Redeemer, pardon me now whilst Thou dost exercise mercy. I am sorry for having offended Thee, and I love Thee with my whole heart. Assist me, O Lord! and support me, that I may never offend Thee more. O Mary! take me forever to thy care.

MEDITATION XLVIII.

An Unprovided Death.

1. Nothing is more certain than death, but nothing more uncertain than the hour of death. It is certain that the year and day of each one's death are already determined by our Lord, though we know them not; and wisely does God conceal them from us, in order that we may always prepare for our departure.

I give Thee thanks, O Jesus! for having waited for me, and for not having called me out of life in the state of mortal sin. During the remainder of my life I will bewail my iniquities and love Thee with all my strength. I know that I must die, and by Thy grace I will prepare myself for a good death.

[1] Subvenite Sancti Dei, occurrite, Angeli Domini, suscipientes animam ejus, offerentes eam in conspectu Altissimi.

2. Jesus Christ admonishes us of the hour of our death, and when will it be? when we least expect it. *At what hour you think not, the Son of man will come.*[1] If then, says St. Bernard, death may at any time take us out of life, we should at all times be prepared for it and keep our accounts in order.

O Jesus! I will not wait until the moment of my death to give myself to Thee. Thou hast said that those who seek Thee shall find Thee: *Seek and ye shall find.*[2] I seek Thee, I desire Thee; grant that I may find Thee. I am sorry for my sins and will nevermore offend Thee.

3. When then, dear Christian, you are tempted to commit sin with the hope of confessing it on the morrow, say to yourself: But who knows but that this moment may be my last? And if in this moment I should be guilty of sin, and death should overtake me, whither should I go? O God! how many miserable sinners have been struck by death in the act of feasting themselves on some poisonous gratification! The devil will say to you: This misfortune will not befall you. But do you answer him: If it should befall me, what will become of me for eternity?

O God! may not that happen to me which has happened to so many other unhappy sinners? How many are now in hell for lesser sins than I have committed! I give Thee thanks, O Jesus! for having waited for me with so much patience, and for having now enlightened me. I have erred in forsaking Thee; and death might have been my punishment; but since Thou givest me time, henceforward I will think of nothing but of loving Thee. Assist me with Thy grace. And do thou, Mary, assist me by thy holy intercession.

[1] "Qua hora non putatis, Filius hominis veniet."—*Luke*, xii. 40.
[2] "Quærite, et invenietis."—*Matt.* vii. 7.

MEDITATION XLIX.

The Eternity of Hell.

1. If hell were not eternal, it would not be hell. Punishment that does not continue for a long time is not grievous punishment. On the other hand, punishment, however light it may be, when it continues for a long time, becomes intolerable. Were a person obliged during the whole of his life to see the same entertainments, or to hear the same music, how could he endure it? What then must it be to remain in hell and to suffer all its torments! And for how long a time? For all eternity. It would be folly, for the sake of a day's pleasure, to condemn one's self to be burnt alive. And is it not folly, for the sake of a sensual gratification, which can last but for one moment, to condemn one's self to the fire of hell, whose victims, though dying every moment, yet never, never die?

O God! preserve me by Thy grace. Woe to me if I should turn my back upon Thee after the great mercy with which Thou hast dealt with me! Keep me, O God! and preserve me from so great a misfortune.

2. Let us awaken our slumbering faith. It is certain that he who is lost is lost forever, without the least hope of being redeemed from eternal ruin. *They shall go into eternal punishment.*[1] He who once enters the prison of hell can come out no more. Otherwise the condemned wretches would flatter themselves with hopes, and would say, Who knows, perhaps God may some day have pity on us and deliver us? But no, they well know that hell will never have an end, and that they must continue to suffer the same torments that they at present endure so long as God shall be God. My dear Redeemer, I know too well that by the past I have forfeited Thy grace, and

[1] "Ibunt hi in supplicium æternum."—*Matt.* xxv. 46.

condemned myself to hell; but I do not know whether Thou hast pardoned me. Hasten to forgive me, O Jesus! while I bitterly lament my offences against Thee, and never suffer me to offend Thee any more.

3. In this life death is of all things the most dreaded, but in hell it is of all things the most desired. There they desire and long for death, but cannot die. *They shall desire to die, and death shall fly from them.*[1] Are there not at least, in that place of torments, some to compassionate them? No, all hate them, and rejoice in their sufferings, which will last forever, without end of mitigation. The trumpet of divine justice continually sounds and thunders forth in their ears those terrible words: "Ever, ever; never, never."

Amongst these miserable beings, O Jesus! I have deserved to be numbered; but do Thou, who hast hitherto preserved me from falling into hell, preserve me for the future from falling into sin, which alone can condemn me to that place of woe. Ah! never suffer me again to become Thy enemy. I love Thee, O infinite goodness! and I am sorry for having offended Thee. Pardon me, and as I have deserved to burn forever in the fire of hell, grant me to burn forever with the fire of Thy holy love. O Mary, in thy powerful intercession do I confide.

MEDITATION L.

The Uncertainty of Grace.

1. *Delay not to be converted to the Lord, and put it not off from day to day: for His wrath shall come on a sudden, and in the time of vengeance will He destroy thee.*[2] The Lord admonishes us to be speedily converted, if we would be

[1] "Desiderabunt mori, et fugiet mors ab eis."—*Apoc.* ix. 6.

[2] "Non tardes converti ad Dominum, et ne differas de die in diem: subito enim veniet ira illius, et in tempore vindictæ disperdet te."—*Ecclus.* v. 9.

saved; because if we go on putting off our conversion from day to day, the time of vengeance will come, when God will neither call nor wait for us any longer; death will overtake us in sin, and there will be no means of escaping eternal damnation. God admonishes us in this manner, because he loves us and wills not to see us perish.

I am convinced, O God! that Thou desirest my salvation; I know that Thou desirest to deal with me in Thy mercy; and it is my desire nevermore to despise Thee.

2. Alas! to how many are the admonitions given by God during life, become now in hell the most cruel swords that pierce their souls! In proportion as the mercies which God showed them were greater, so were their crimes more enormous.

If, O Jesus! Thou hadst condemned me to hell, as I have deserved, how great would have been my punishment, since Thy graces and favors have been so abundant towards me! No, I will no longer be ungrateful to Thee. Say to me what Thou pleasest, and I will obey Thee in all things. I am sorry for having so often offended Thee; henceforward I will not seek to please myself, but to please only Thee, my God and only good.

3. How cautious are men in their temporal affairs, and yet how negligent in the affairs of eternity! If a man has to receive a sum of money from another, he uses every expedient to obtain it as quickly as possible, saying, "Who knows what may happen?" And yet, why do so many live months and years in sin? Because they do not say, when the soul is at stake, "Who knows what may happen?" If money be lost, however valuable it may be, all is not lost; but if the soul be lost, all is lost, and must be lost forever, without hope of recovery.

My beloved Redeemer, Thou hast given me life that I may become worthy of Thy grace; and yet I have often renounced Thy grace for something worse than nothing. Pardon me, O infinite goodness! for I am sorry, from

the bottom of my heart, for having done so. O Jesus! Thou hast done too much to oblige me to love Thee, and I desire to love Thee to the utmost of my power. I love Thee, my sovereign good, I love Thee more than myself. Permit me not, O God! to cease to love Thee any more. O Mary, holy queen! protect me.

MEDITATION LI.

The Death of Jesus for the Love of Men.

1. Was it ever possible that God, the Creator of all things, should have been pleased to die for the love of his creatures? It is of faith that he has done so. *He hath loved us, and hath delivered Himself for us.*[1] The earth, the heavens, and all nature, with astonishment beheld Jesus, the only begotten Son of God, the lord of the universe, die of intense pain and anguish, on a disgraceful cross; and why? For the love of men. And do men believe this and not love God?

I have believed it, O Jesus! and yet not only have I not loved Thee, but I have frequently offended Thee. Pardon me, I beseech Thee, and remind me continually of the death which Thou hast suffered for me, that I may nevermore offend Thee, but may always love Thee.

2. It was not necessary for man's salvation that God should die; one drop of his blood, a single tear, or a prayer would have been sufficient, because being of infinite value, it would have redeemed this or a thousand other worlds.

But, O Jesus! Thou wouldst suffer so much, to teach us Thy great love for us. Hence, St. Bonaventure exclaims, but with much greater reason may I exclaim, who have so often offended my Redeemer: "Alas! my God, why hast Thou so much loved me? why, O Lord, why? Who am I?" O divine Pastor of my soul, behold

[1] "Dilexit nos, et tradidit semetipsum pro nobis."—*Eph.* v. 2.

I am the lost sheep, in quest of which Thou didst come upon the earth. I have ungratefully fled away from Thee; since, unmindful of the sufferings which I have occasioned Thee, Thou callest me, miserable as I am, but overcome with Thy great goodness, embracing Thy sacred feet, nailed to the cross. Jesus, my love, my treasure! I love Thee, and because I love Thee I am sorry for having offended Thee.

3. St. Bernard, imagining himself present when Pilate passed sentence of death on our Blessed Saviour, thus addresses him: "What hast Thou done, my most innocent Saviour, that Thou shouldst be thus condemned?[1] Thou art innocence itself; and how do I now behold Thee condemned to death, even to the death of the cross? What crime hast Thou committed?" And he proceeds to answer, "Thy crime is love." As if he had said, Ah! it is Thy too great love for us, and not Pilate, that condemns Thee to death.

When, my dear Redeemer, I remember the offences I have committed against Thee, it is not hell, which I have deserved for them, that makes me grieve, but the love which Thou hast shown me. Ah! my crucified God, I desire to be henceforth and forever Thine, and I will love no other but Thee. Strengthen my weakness, and make me faithful to Thee. Holy Mary, mother of God, enable me to love Jesus; this is the only favor I ask.

MEDITATION LII.

The Certainty of being either Saved or Lost.

1. *With fear and trembling*, saith the Apostle, *work out your salvation.*[2] In order to be saved we should tremble

[1] Quid fecisti, innocentissime Salvator, quod sic condemnareris?

[2] "Cum metu et tremore vestram salutem operamini."—*Phil.* ii. 12.

lest we be lost, for there is no medium; we must be either saved or lost forever. He who trembles not is in great danger of being lost, because he takes but little care to employ the means of obtaining salvation. God desires that all should be saved, and he gives to all his grace; but he requires that all should co-operate for this end. All desire to be saved; many, because they will not employ the means of salvation, are lost. St. Philip Neri used to say, "Heaven is not made for the slothful."

Enlighten me, O Lord, that I may know what I ought to do, and what to avoid, for I desire to do all that Thou requirest of me. I am determined, by Thy grace, to save my soul.

2. St. Teresa said to her religious, "One soul! my daughters, one eternity!" She meant that in this world we ought not to attend to anything but to the salvation of our souls; because if the soul be lost, all will be lost; and if once lost, will be lost forever. Benedict XII, being asked by a prince for a favor that he could not grant without committing sin, answered the ambassador: "Tell your prince that if I had two souls I would give him one; but as I have only one, I cannot consent to lose it for his sake." Thus should we answer the devil or the world when they offer us forbidden fruit.

O God! how often have I lost my soul by forfeiting Thy grace! But since Thou offerest me Thy pardon, I detest all the offences I have committed against Thee, and love Thee above all things.

3. Would that we were fully impressed with the meaning of that great maxim of St. Francis Xavier, "There is but one evil, and there is but one good in the world!" The only evil is damnation; the only good, salvation. No; poverty, infirmity, ignominies are not evils; these when embraced with resignation will increase our glory in heaven. On the other hand, health, riches, and

honors are not goods for too many Christians, because they become to them greater occasion of losing their souls.

Save me then, O God! and do with me what Thou pleasest. Thou knowest and willest what is best for me. I abandon myself to Thy mercy: *Into Thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.*[1] I am so sorry for having been hitherto opposed to Thy will, as to die to expiate my offences; but now I love Thee, and will nothing but what Thou willest. Grant me Thy love, that I may be faithful to Thee. And, Mary, give me thy powerful assistance.

MEDITATION LIII.

The Certainty of Death.

1. How is it possible, O God! that there should be any Christians who believe that they must one day die; and that after death an eternity of happiness or misery awaits them; who know that on the moment of death will depend their being happy or miserable forever; and yet adopt not all the means of securing for themselves the blessing of a good death?

Give, O Lord! tears to my eyes that I may bewail my offences against Thee. I knew that by offending Thee I should forfeit Thy grace and condemn myself to eternal torments; I knew this, and yet I was not restrained from committing sin. I am sorry, O God! for having dishonored Thee, by renouncing Thee for the sake of my own wretched inclinations; have pity on me.

2. If we hear of one dying suddenly who did not live prepared for death, we compassionate him, and say, "Alas! what has become of his poor soul?" And yet why are we not ourselves prepared at all times to die? It may be that the misfortune of a sudden death may

[1] "In manus tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum."—*Ps.* xxx. 6.

happen to us; but whether sooner or later, whether prepared or unprepared, whether we think of it or not, we must one day surrender our souls into the hands of God. The place of execution is already prepared for us, and the malady which is to be our executioner and take us out of the world is stealing upon us; why then do we not endeavor to become daily more and more united with Jesus Christ, who will soon become our Judge?

My dear Redeemer, I hope through the merits of Thy death to live and die in Thy grace and favor. I love Thee, O infinite goodness, and I hope to love Thee always in this life and for all eternity in the next.

3. In every succeeding age, cities and kingdoms are peopled with new beings, and their predecessors buried in their graves. Those who lived here a century ago, where are they now! gone into eternity! And thus, dear reader, in a hundred years hence, even in a much shorter time, neither you nor I will be alive in this world, but we shall be either happy or miserable forever in the next; either saved or lost for all eternity, one or other will most certainly be our lot.

I may then, O God! either be saved, as I hope I shall be, or I may be lost on account of my sins And is it possible that I may be lost, and yet not think of adopting every means of securing my salvation? Enlighten me, O Lord! and make known to me what I must do to be saved, for with Thy help I will do all that Thou requirest of me. I have many times lost my respect for Thee, my Father, but Thou hast not ceased to love me. I detest all my offences against Thee, and I love Thee, O God! with my whole soul. Give me Thy blessing, Father, and never suffer me to be again separated from Thee. Mary, my mother, have pity on me.

MEDITATION LIV.

The Vanity of the World.

1. *Only the grave,* saith holy Job, *remaineth for me.*[1] Days and years pass away, pleasures, honors, and riches pass away, and what will be the end? Death will come and strip us of all, and we shall be buried in the grave to corrupt and moulder into dust, deserted and forgotten by all. Alas! how, in the end of our lives, will the remembrance of all we have acquired in this world serve for nothing but to increase our anguish and our uncertainty of salvation!

O death, O death, never depart from before my eyes. O God, do Thou enlighten me.

2. *My life is cut off as by a weaver.*[2] How many, in the midst of executing their long-contemplated designs, are overtaken by death and deprived of all things! Ah, with what pain and remorse will the goods of this world be regarded, on the bed of death, by those who have been unduly attached to them! To worldlings who are spiritually blind the goods of this present life appear great; but death will discover what they really are, dust—smoke, and vanity. Before the light of this last lamp all the dazzling grandeur of this world will vanish and disappear. The greatest fortunes, the highest honors, when considered on the bed of death, will lose all their value and splendor. The shade of death will obscure even crowns and sceptres.

Grant me, O God! Thy holy grace, for this alone is all I desire. I am grieved for having ever despised such a treasure. Jesus, have pity on me.

3. Of what avail then will riches be at the hour of death, when nothing will remain for us but a wooden

[1] "Solum mihi superest sepulcrum."—*Job,* xvii. 1.

[2] "Præcisa est velut a texente vita mea."—*Isa.* xxxviii. 12.

coffin and a winding-sheet? Of what avail will be the honors which we have acquired, when no others will remain for us but a funeral procession and a tomb, which will not be able to afford us the least satisfaction, if our souls should be lost? And of what avail will the beauty of the body be, when the body itself will become a mass of worms, infect the air with its stench, and excite horror in all who behold it?

My dear Redeemer, although I knew that by sinning I should forfeit Thy friendship, yet did I sin; but I hope for pardon from Thee who hast died to purchase pardon for me. Oh that I had never offended Thee, my good God! I behold the love which Thou hast shown me; and this increases my grief for having displeased Thee who art so good a Father. I love Thee, O Lord! and will never live without loving Thee; give me perseverance. Mary, my mother, pray to Jesus for me.

MEDITATION LV.

The Provoking of God by Sin.

1. Thus does the royal prophet speak of sinners: *They tempted and provoked the most high God.*[1] God is incapable of grief; but were it possible for him to grieve, every sin that men commit would deeply afflict him and deprive him of happiness.

Sin, O God! is the return I have made Thee for Thy love! How often have I renounced Thy friendship for the sake of some wretched self-gratification! O infinite goodness! because Thou art such, pardon me my offences.

2. St. Bernard, moreover, adds that the malice of sin is so great that it would annihilate God, were this possible.[2] If God could die, mortal sin would deprive him

[1] "Exacerbaverunt Deum excelsum."—*Ps.* lxxvii. 56.

[2] "Perimit Deum."—*S.* 3 *in temp. pasc.*

of life. And how? Father Medina answers, "Because it would give him infinite sorrow."[1] How afflicting is it to be injured by those whom we have especially befriended and loved! What then must it be for God to behold man, whom he has favored with so many and so great benefits and loved with so great love, even to shedding his blood and laying down his life,—what must it be to behold man turn his back upon him and despise his grace for a mere nothing, for a fit of passion, or a momentary pleasure! Were he capable of grief and sadness, he would die of the bitterness which such conduct would occasion him.[2]

Dearest Jesus, I am the lost sheep; Thou art the good shepherd who hast laid down Thy life for Thy sheep; have pity on me, pardon me for all the displeasure which my sins have occasioned Thee. I am grieved, O Jesus! for having offended Thee, and love Thee with my whole soul.

3. It was because our loving Redeemer had our sins constantly before his eyes that his life was so painful and full of bitterness. This was the cause of his sweating blood and suffering the agonies of death in the garden of Gethsemane, where he declared that "his soul was sorrowful even unto death." What made him sweat blood and cast him into so dreadful an agony but the sight of the sins of men?

Give me then, O Jesus! a share of the sorrow which then oppressed Thee for my sins; grant that it may afflict me during my whole life, and, if Thou pleasest, even unto death. O Jesus! I desire nevermore to displease Thee, I will nevermore afflict Thee, but will love Thee with all my strength, who art my love, my life, and my only good. Suffer me not to offend Thee any more. Mary, my hope, have compassion on me.

[1] "Destrueret Deum, eo quod esset causa tristitiæ infinitæ."—*De Satisf.* q. 1.

[2] "Tristis est anima mea usque ad mortem."—*Matt.* xxvi. 38.

MEDITATION LVI.

The Last Judgment.

1. The last day is called in Scripture a day of wrath and misery;[1] and such it will be for all those unhappy beings who have died in mortal sin; for on that day their most secret crimes will be made manifest to the whole world, and themselves separated from the company of the saints, and condemned to the eternal prison of hell, where they will suffer all the agonies of ever dying yet always remaining alive. St. Jerome, in the cave of Bethlehem, devoted to continual prayer and penance, trembled at the bare thought of the general judgment. The Ven. F. Juvenal Ancina hearing that sequence for the dead sung, "Dies iræ, dies illa," was so struck with the anticipation of judgment that he left the world and embraced a religious life.

O Jesus! what will become of me on that day? Shall I be placed on Thy right with the elect, or on Thy left with the reprobate? I know that I have deserved to be placed on Thy left, but I know also that Thou wilt still pardon me, if I repent of my sins: wherefore I do repent of them with my whole heart, and am resolved rather to die than offend Thee any more.

2. As this will be a day of calamity and terror for the reprobate, so will it be a day of joy and triumph for the elect; for then, in the sight of all mankind, will the blessed souls of the elect be proclaimed queens of paradise, and spouses of the immaculate Lamb.

O Jesus! Thy precious blood is my hope. Remember not the offences that I have committed against Thee, and inflame my whole soul with Thy love. I love Thee, my sovereign good, and I trust that in that day I shall be

[1] "Dies iræ . . . dies calamitatis et miseriæ."—*Soph.* i. 15.

associated with those loving souls who will praise and love Thee for all eternity.

3. Choose, my soul; choose now either an eternal crown in that blessed kingdom, where God will be seen and loved face to face in the company of the saints, of the angels, and of Mary the Mother of Jesus: or the prison of hell, where you must weep and lament forever, abandoned by God and by all.

"O Lamb of God that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on us."[1] O divine Lamb, who, to deliver us from the pains of hell, wast pleased to sacrifice Thy divine life by a bitter death upon the cross, have compassion on us; but more particularly on me who have more than others offended Thee. I am sorry above every evil for having dishonored Thee by my sins, but I hope on that day to honor Thee before men and angels, by proclaiming Thy mercies towards me. O Jesus! help me to love Thee; I desire Thee alone. O Mary, holy queen! protect me in that day.

MEDITATION LVII.

The Intensity of the Pains of Hell.

1. In this life when a person suffers, however great his sufferings may be, he may, at least occasionally, obtain some mitigation or repose. A sick man may suffer all the day long the pains of the most cruel disorders; but, when night comes, he may perhaps sleep a little and be somewhat relieved. Not so with the miserable reprobate. For him there is no relief, no repose. He must weep and lament forever, he must suffer forever, and suffer torments the most excruciating, without once having throughout all eternity one moment of ease or mitigation.

[1] Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis.

Such, O Jesus! would have been my lot, hadst Thou called me out of life in my sins. Dearest Redeemer, I refuse not to suffer, but will truly love Thee.

2. In this life by constantly suffering pain we become accustomed to it and better able to bear it; time mitigates sufferings which at first were most grievous to us. But will the souls in hell, by eternally suffering the torments which they endure, by the habit of enduring them for so many years, will they ever find their intensity diminished? No, for the torments of hell are of such a nature that, at the end of a hundred or a thousand years, those souls will experience the same degree of pain from them as when they first descended into that bottomless abyss.

In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped, let me never be confounded.[1] I know, O Lord! that I have frequently deserved hell, yet I know likewise that Thou dost not desire the death of the sinner, but that he be converted and live. O my God! I will not continue obstinate, but will repent with my whole soul of all my sins, and will love Thee more than myself; do Thou restore me to life, to the life of Thy holy grace.

3. In this life, when a person suffers he has the pity and sympathy of his relatives and friends; and these afford at least some comfort. But how miserable would it be for a man in the most excruciating pains to be upbraided and reproached by his relatives and friends with the misdeeds for which he was suffering, saying to him without pity, "Rave on in rage and despair; you have deserved all you suffer!" The miserable wretches in hell suffer all kinds of torments, suffer them continually without any relief or comfort, and have none to compassionate them. Not even God can compassionate them, for they are his enemies; nor Mary, the Mother of Mercy; nor the angels, nor the saints; on the contrary,

[1] "In te, Domine, speravi; non confundar in æternum."—*Ps.* xxx. 2.

they rejoice in their sufferings. And, at the same time, what is the conduct of the devils towards the reprobate? They trample upon them and reproach them with the crimes which they have committed against God, and for which they are now most justly punished.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, have pity on me, for thou hast it now in thy power to take pity on me and to recommend me to thy divine Son. O Jesus! Thou who didst not spare Thyself, to have compassion on me, but didst die upon the cross for my sake, save me, and may my salvation be to love Thee forever. I am sorry, O Lord! for having offended Thee, and will love Thee with my whole heart.

MEDITATION LVIII.

The Love of Christ Crucified.

1. Who could have conceived that the Son of God, the Lord of the universe, to show his love for us, would suffer and die upon the cross, if he had not really done so? With reason therefore did Moses and Elias on Mount Tabor speak of the death of Jesus Christ as of an excess of love.[1] And what could be greater excess of love than for the Creator to die for his creatures?

To make Thee an adequate return for Thy love, my dear Redeemer, it would be necessary for another God to die for Thee. It would therefore be but little, it would be nothing, were we poor miserable worms of the earth to give up our whole lives for Thee, who hast given Thine for us.

2. What should still more excite us to love him is the ardent desire with which, through the course of his life, he longed for the hour of his death. By this desire he indeed proved how great his love was for us. *I have a*

[1] "Dicebant excessum ejus, quem completurus erat in Jerusalem." —*Luke*, ix. 31.

baptism, said he, *wherewith I am to be baptized; and how am I straitened until it be accomplished.*[1] I must be baptized with the baptism of my own blood, to wash away the sins of men, and how am I dying with the desire of my bitter Passion and death! My soul, lift up your eyes, and behold thy Lord hanging upon a disgraceful cross; behold the blood which trickles down from his wounds; behold his mangled body, all inviting you to love him. Your Redeemer in his sufferings would have you love him at least through compassion.

O Jesus! Thou didst not refuse me Thy life and precious blood, and shall I refuse Thee anything that Thou requirest of me? No, Thou hast given Thyself to me without reserve. I will give myself to Thee in like manner.

3. St. Francis de Sales, speaking of these words of the Apostle, *The charity of Christ presseth us*,[2] says: "Knowing that Jesus Christ, being true God, has loved us even to the laying-down of his life for us, and this upon a cross, do we not feel our hearts as it were in a press, forcibly straitened, and love expressed from them by a violence which is the more powerful as it is the more amiable?" And he adds: "Why, therefore, do we not cast ourselves upon Jesus Christ crucified, to die on the cross for the love of him who has willingly died upon the cross for the love of us? I will adhere to him, should we say, and will never abandon him; I will die with him, and be consumed in the fire of his love. My Jesus has given himself entirely to me, and I will give myself entirely to him. I will live and die upon his bosom; neither life nor death shall ever separate me from him. O eternal love! my soul seeks Thee and espouses Thee forever."[3]

[1] "Baptismo habeo baptizari, et quomodo coarctor usquedum perficietur?"—*Luke*, xii. 50.

[2] "Charitas Christi urget nos."—2 *Cor.* v. 14.

[3] *Love of God*, P. 7, ch. 8.

Mary, Mother of God, obtain that I may belong entirely to Jesus Christ.

MEDITATION LIX.

The Irretrievable Loss of the Soul.

1. There is no error so fatal in its consequences as the loss of eternal salvation. Other errors may be repaired; if a person lose a situation, he may perhaps in time regain it; if he lose his goods, he may replace them, but if he lose his soul, he has no remedy nor hope of redemption. He can die but once; and if that once his soul be lost, it must be lost forever, and no power can save it for all eternity.

Behold, O God! a wretched sinner prostrate at Thy feet, one who for so many years past has deserved to dwell in hell without further hope of salvation, but who now loves Thee, and is sorry above every other evil for having offended Thee, and hopes for mercy.

2. Does then nothing remain for the many wretched souls in hell but to lament bitterly, and say, "Therefore we have erred,"[1] and there is no remedy for our error, nor will there be so long as God shall be God?

Ah! my Redeemer, were I in hell, I could nevermore repent, nor love Thee. I thank Thee for having borne with me with so great patience, even though I have deserved hell; and now that I am still able to repent and to love Thee, I do sincerely repent for having offended Thy infinite goodness, and love Thee above all things, more than I love myself. Never permit me, O Jesus! to cease to love Thee.

3. Oh, what a torment must it be to the souls in hell to think that they knew their error before they were lost, and that they are lost entirely through their own fault! If a person lose a gold ring through carelessness,

[1] "Ergo erravimus."—*Wis.* v. 6.

or a valuable coin, he has no peace for thinking that he has lost it through his own fault. O God! how great is the internal torment of the wicked when they exclaim, "I have lost my soul, I have lost heaven, I have lost my God; I have lost my all; and this through my own fault!"

O my dear Saviour! I desire never to lose Thee: if I have hitherto lost Thee, I have done ill; I am sorry for it with my whole soul, and love Thee above all things. O Jesus! Thou hast saved me from hell that I may love Thee. I will therefore truly love Thee. Enable me to compensate by my love for the offences which I have committed against Thee. Holy Virgin Mary, thou art my hope.

MEDITATION LX.

We Must Die.

1. How much is contained in these words, "we must die!" Christian brother, you must one day certainly die. As your name was one day entered in the baptismal register, so will it one day be entered in the book of the dead, and this day is already determined by Almighty God. As you now speak of the dear memory of your father, or of your uncle, or brother, so will posterity speak of you. As you now frequently hear of the deaths of your friends or acquaintances, so will others hear of your death, and you will be gone into eternity.

O God! what will then become of me? When my body is carried to the church, and Mass said over me, where will be my soul? Enable me, O Lord! to do something for Thy service before death overtakes me. How wretched should I be if at this moment it should surprise me!

2. What would you say of a criminal on the way to execution who was looking about him here and there, and attending only to the amusements which happened to be

going on? Would you not think him mad, or a man who did not believe his impending fate? Are you not every moment advancing towards death? And what do you think of? You know that you must die, and that you can die only once. You believe that after this life another awaits you which will never end; and that this eternal life will be happy or miserable according as your accounts are found at the day of your judgment; and how can you believe these truths and attend to anything else than making preparation for a good death?

Enlighten me, O my God, and let the thoughts of death, and of the eternity in which I must dwell, be ever present to my mind.

3. Look at the skeletons heaped up in cemeteries: they are silently saying to you, "What has happened to us will soon overtake you." The same is repeated to you by the portraits of your parents who are dead, by the letters of their handwriting, by the rooms, the beds, the clothes which they once possessed and used, but which they have now quitted and left behind for you. All these things remind you of death which is waiting for you.

My crucified Jesus, I will not delay to embrace Thee till the moment of my death, when Thy crucified image will be presented to me; but I will embrace Thee now and press Thee to my heart. Hitherto I have frequently expelled Thee from my soul, but now I love Thee more than myself, and am sorry for having despised Thee. For the future I will be always Thine, and Thou shalt be always mine. This is my hope through Thy bitter Passion and death. And this also do I hope for through thy protection, O ever blessed Mary!

MEDITATION LXI.

The Love with which God receives the Repentant Sinner.

1. The kings of the earth reject from their presence their rebellious subjects when they come to seek for pardon; but Jesus Christ assures us that he will never reject any rebellious sinner that penitently casts himself at his feet: *Him that cometh to Me I will not cast out.*[1] He despiseth not the heart that is humble and sorry for having offended him: *A contrite and humble heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.*[2]

I do not, O Jesus! deserve Thy pardon for the offences which I have committed against Thee, but Thou knowest that nothing afflicts me so much as the remembrance of my having offended Thee.

2. But how can I be afraid that Thou, my God, wilt cast me off, when Thou invitest me to return to Thee, and offerest me Thy pardon? *Return to Me and I will receive thee.*[3] How can I doubt, when Thou promisest to embrace us, when we are converted to Thee? *Turn ye to Me, and I will turn to you.*[4] Do not, then, O Lord! turn Thy back upon me, for I will renounce all things, and turn myself to Thee, my sovereign good. I have offended Thee too long, and will now at least love Thee.

3. Our good God moreover adds that if the sinner repent of the evil which he has done, he is willing to forget all his sins: *If the wicked do penance . . . living he shall live, and shall not die. I will not remember all his iniquities that he hath done.*[5]

[1] "Eum qui venit ad me, non ejiciam foras."—*John*, vi. 37.

[2] "Cor contritum et humiliatum, Deus, non despicies."—*Ps.* l. 19.

[3] "Revertere ad me . . . et ego suscipiam te."—*Jer.* iii. 1.

[4] "Convertimini ad me . . . et convertar ad vos."—*Zach.* i. 3.

[5] "Si autem impius egerit pœnitentiam . . . vita vivet et non morietur; omnium iniquitatum ejus, quas operatus est, non recordabor."—*Ezek.* xviii. 21.

My dear Redeemer! I will never forget my sins, that I may always bewail the evil which I have done against Thee; but I trust and hope that Thou, as Thou hast promised, wilt soon forget them, and that my past iniquities will not hinder Thee from loving me. Hast Thou not said that Thou *lovest those who love Thee?*[1] Hitherto I have not loved Thee, and have deserved Thy hatred; but now I will love Thee and hope that Thou wilt no longer reject me; and as Thou forgettest what is past, forgive me, unite me to Thyself, and never suffer me to be again separated from Thee. Mary, assist me by thy holy intercession.

MEDITATION LXII.

Temptations to Relapse.

1. O Christian! when the devil again tempts you to sin, telling you that "God is merciful," remember that the Lord "showeth mercy towards them that fear him,"[2] and not to them that despise him. "God is merciful," it is true; yet how many does he daily condemn to the torments of hell! "God is merciful," but he is also just. He is merciful to those who repent of their sins, but not to those who abuse his mercy to offend him the more freely. O God, how often have I done this! how often have I offended Thee because Thou wast good and merciful!

2. The devil will say to you, "As he has pardoned you many past sins, so will he pardon you the sin which you are now about to commit." No, you must reply; because he has so often forgiven me, I ought to be the more afraid, that, if I should again offend him, he will no more pardon me, but punish me for all the crimes I have ever committed against him. Attend to the ad-

[1] "Ego diligentes me diligo."—*Prov.* viii. 17.

[2] Et misericordia ejus timentibus eum,

monition of the Holy Ghost: *Say not, I have sinned and what harm hath befallen me? for the most High is a patient rewarder.*[1]

O God! how basely have I corresponded with Thy favors! Thou hast bestowed graces upon me, and I have requited them with injuries; Thou hast loaded me with blessings, and I have insulted and dishonored Thee. But for the future it shall not be so. The more Thou hast borne with me, so much the more will I love Thee. Do Thou assist my weakness.

3. The devil will say to you: "But do you not see that you cannot now resist this temptation?" Answer him: But if I do not resist now, how shall I be able to resist afterwards, when I shall have become weaker, and the divine assistance will fail me? Am I to be told that in proportion as I multiply the number of my sins, God will multiply the number of his graces towards me? Finally, he will say to you: "But although you were to commit this sin, you may still be saved." Say to him in reply: I may be saved; but is this a reason why I should write my own sentence of condemnation to hell? I may be saved; but I may also be lost, and this is more probable. This is not an affair to be left to the chance of a "may be."

But, O Lord! how much hast Thou done for me? I have multiplied my faults, and Thou hast increased Thy graces! The thought of this embitters my sorrow for having so heinously offended Thee. My good God, why have I offended Thee? Oh that I could die of grief! Help me, O Jesus! for I desire to be wholly Thine. Holy Mary, obtain for me perseverance in virtue, and suffer me not any more to live ungrateful to God who has so much loved me.

[1] "Ne dicas: Peccavi, et quid accidit mihi triste? Altissimus enim est patiens redditor."—*Ecclus.* v. 4.

MEDITATION LXIII.

The Resurrection of the Body.

1. A day will come which will be the last of days, when this world will be no more. Before the coming of the Judge, fire will descend from heaven, and consume everything that is upon the earth: *The earth and the works which are in it shall be burnt up.*[1] So that in that day everything upon the earth will be reduced to ashes. O God! what will all the vanities of this world then appear, for which so many now sacrifice the salvation of their souls? What appearance will all the highest dignities of this earth then make,—its purple, its crowns, and its sceptres? O the folly of those who shall have loved them! And O the lamentations of those who for the love of such vanities shall have lost their God!

2. *The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall rise again.*[2] This trumpet will call all men together from their graves to come to judgment. Oh how beautiful and resplendent will the bodies of the just appear! *Then shall the just shine like the sun.*[3] On the contrary, how ugly and deformed will the bodies of the reprobate appear! What a torment will it be to these wretched souls to be again united with their bodies, for whose gratification they have lost heaven and lost their God, to be cast with them forever into hell, there to burn together in eternal flames! Happy will they then be who have denied their bodies all gratifications displeasing to God; and who, in order to hold them in greater subjection, have mortified them by fasting and penance!

O Jesus! *turn not Thy face away from me*, as I have deserved.[4] How often, for the sake of gratifying my

[1] "Terra et quæ in ipsa sunt opera exurentur."—2 *Peter*, iii. 10.

[2] "Canet tuba, et mortui resurgent."—1 *Cor.* xv. 52

[3] "Tunc justi fulgebunt sicut sol."—*Matt.* xiii. 43.

[4] "Non avertas faciem tuam a me."—*Ps.* cxlii. 7.

senses, have I renounced Thy friendship! Oh that I had died rather than have thus dishonored Thee! Have pity on me.

3. All mankind being assembled together, will be summoned by angels to appear in the valley of Josaphat, there to be publicly judged before all: *Nations, nations in the valley of destruction.*[1] O my God! and must I appear in that valley? In what place shall I stand there? with the elect in glory, or with the reprobate in chains? My beloved Redeemer, Thy precious blood is my only hope. Woe to me! how often have I deserved to be condemned to dwell forever in hell, far, far from Thee, without being able to love Thee! No, my Jesus! I will love Thee forever, in this life and in the next. Permit me not to be ever again separated from Thee by sin. Thou knowest my weakness; be Thou always my help, O Jesus! and do not abandon me. Mary, my advocate, obtain for me the gift of holy perseverance.

MEDITATION LXIV.

The Love of God in Giving us His Son.

1. So great was God's love for us that, after having loaded us with gifts and graces, he bestowed upon us his own Son: *God so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son.*[2] For us poor miserable worms of the earth, the eternal Father sent his beloved Son into this world to lead a poor and despised life, and to undergo the most ignominious and bitter death that any mortal on earth had ever suffered, an accumulation of internal as well as eternal torments, such as to cause him to exclaim when dying, "*My God, my God, why hast Thou for-*

[1] "Populi populi in valle concisionis"—*Joel*, iii. 14.

[2] "Sic Deus dilexit mundum, ut Filium suum unigenitum daret."—*John*, iii. 16.

saken Me?[1] O eternal God! who but Thyself, who art a God of infinite love, could have bestowed upon us a gift of such infinite value? I love Thee, O infinine goodness! I love Thee, O infinite love!

2. *He spared not even His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all.*[2] But, O God eternal! consider that this divine Son, whom Thou dost doom to die, is innocent, and has ever been obedient to Thee in all things. Thou lovest him even as Thyself, how then canst Thou condemn him to death for the expiation of our sins? The eternal Father replies: "It was precisely because he was my Son, because he was innocent, because he was obedient to me in all things, that it was my will he should lay down his life, in order that you might know the greatness of that love which we both bear towards you."

May all creatures forever praise Thee, O God! for the excess of bounty through which Thou hast caused Thine own Son to die for the deliverance of us Thy servants. For the love of this Thy Son, have pity on me, pardon me, and save me; and let my salvation be to love Thee forever, both in this world and in the next.

3. *But God* (*who is rich in mercy*) *for His too great charity wherewith He loved us . . . hath quickened us together in Christ.*[3] Too great, says the Apostle, too great has been the love of God towards us. We by sin were dead, and he raised us to life again by the death of his Son. But no, such love was not too great for the infinite bounty of our God. Being infinite in all perfection, he was infinite in love.

[1] "Deus meus, Deus meus, ut quid dereliquisti me?"—*Matt.* xxvii. 46.

[2] "Proprio Filio suo non pepercit, sed pro nobis omnibus tradidit illum."—*Rom.* viii. 32.

[3] "Deus autem, qui dives est in misericordia propter nimiam charitatem suam qua dilexit nos, et cum essemus mortui peccatis, convivificavit nos in Christo."—*Eph.* ii. 4.

But, O Lord! how comes it that after Thou hast shown such love towards men, there are so few who love Thee? How much do I desire to become one of the number of these few! Hitherto I have not known Thee, my sovereign good, but have forsaken Thee; I am sorry for it from the bottom of my heart, and will so love Thee that, though all should leave Thee, I will never forsake Thee, my God, my love, and my all. O Mary! unite me ever more and more to my dearest Saviour.

MEDITATION LXV.

Earnest Labor to Secure Eternal Salvation.

1. To be saved it is not sufficient to profess merely to do what is absolutely necessary. If, for example, a person wishes to avoid only mortal sins, without making any account of those which are venial, he will easily fall into mortal sins and lose his soul. He who desires to avoid only such dangers as are absolutely the immediate occasions of sin will most probably one day discover that he has fallen into grievous crimes and is lost. O God! with what attention are the princes of this world served! Everything is avoided that can possibly give them the least offence for fear of losing their favor; but with what carelessness art Thou served! Everything that can endanger the life of the body is shunned with the greatest caution, while the dangers which threaten the life of the soul are not feared!

O God! how negligently have I hitherto served Thee. Henceforth I will serve Thee with the greatest attention; be Thou my helper and assist me.

2. O Christian brother! if God should act as sparingly with you as you do with him, what would become of you? If he should grant you only grace barely sufficient, would you be saved? You would be able to ob-

tain salvation, but you would not obtain it; because in this life temptations frequently occur so violent that it is morally impossible not to yield to them without a special assistance from God. But God does not afford his special assistance to those who deal sparingly with him: *He who soweth sparingly shall also reap sparingly.*[1]

But, O God! Thou hast not dealt sparingly with me, while I have been so ungrateful towards Thee as to repay Thy many favors with offences, Thou, instead of chastising me, hast redoubled Thy graces towards me. No, my God! I will never more be ungrateful to Thee, as I have hitherto been.

3. To obtain salvation is not an easy task, but difficult, and very difficult. We carry about us the rebellious flesh, which allures to the gratification of sense; and we have, moreover, numberless enemies to contend with in the world, in hell, and within our own selves, who are ever tempting us to evil. It is true, the grace of God is never wanting to us; but still this grace requires us to struggle hard to overcome temptations, and to pray fervently to obtain more powerful assistance, as the danger becomes greater.

O Jesus! I desire nevermore to be separated from Thee and deprived of Thy love. Hitherto I have been ungrateful to Thee, and have turned my back upon Thee, but will now love Thee with my whole soul, and fear nothing so much as to cease to love Thee. Thou knowest my weakness; assist me, therefore, Thou who art my only hope and confidence. And thou, O ever-blessed Virgin Mary, cease not to intercede for me.

[1] "Qui parce seminat, parce et metet."—2 *Cor.* ix. 6.

MEDITATION LXVI.

The Appearance of the Body immediately after Death.

1. *Remember, man, that thou art dust, and into dust thou shalt return.*[1] At present you can see, feel, speak, and move. The day will come when you will no longer see, nor feel, nor speak, nor move. When your soul is separated from your body, your body will be consumed by worms and will moulder into dust; and your soul will go into eternity to be happy or miserable according as you have deserved by the actions of your life.

O God! I have deserved only Thy displeasure and the punishments of hell; but Thou wouldst not have me despair, but repent and love Thee, and place all my hopes in Thee.

2. Figure to yourself the body of one whose soul has just departed. Look on his corpse still remaining on the bed: the head fallen upon the chest, the hair in disorder and still bathed in the cold sweat of death, the eyes sunk, the cheeks fallen in, the face of the color of ashes, the lips and tongue black; so as to be loathsome and frightful to every beholder. See, dear Christian, to what a state your body will shortly be reduced which you now treat with so much indulgence.

O my God! I will no longer resist Thy gracious calls. What now remains of the many gratifications with which I have indulged my body, but remorse of conscience which continually torments me? Oh that I had rather died than ever offended Thee!

3. When the body begins to corrupt, it becomes still more horrible. Twenty-four hours have scarcely elapsed since that young person died, and already his corpse begins to be offensive. The windows of the apartment

[1] "Memento, homo, quia pulvis es, et in pulverem reverteris."—*Gen.* iii. 19.

must be opened, and perfumes employed, that the stench may not infect the whole house. His relatives and friends are in haste to commit him to the grave. He may have been a person of high rank, and to what does the pampering of his body now serve? It only hastens its corruption and increases its offensiveness.

Dearest Redeemer, although I knew that by sin I should greatly offend Thee, yet did I commit it. To afford myself a short-lived satisfaction, I was willing to forfeit the invaluable treasures of Thy grace. With sorrow do I cast myself prostrate at Thy feet; pardon me through the blood which Thou hast shed for me. Receive me again into Thy favor, and chastise me as Thou pleasest. I will willingly accept every chastisement, provided I be not deprived of Thy love. I love Thee, O God! with my whole heart; I love Thee more than myself. Grant that I may remain faithful to Thee till the end of my life. Mary, my hope, intercede for me

MEDITATION LXVII.

The State of the Body in the Grave.

1. Consider now, Christian brother, to what a state your body will be reduced in the grave. It will first become livid and then black. Mould of a dirty white color will be produced over the whole surface of the flesh, from which a rotten humor will begin to ooze and flow upon the ground. In this humor a multitude of maggots will be generated, which will feast themselves upon the putrid flesh. Rats and other vermin will join in the feast and prey upon your poor carcass, some upon the outside, while others will enter into the mouth and others into the bowels. See to what a state that body will be reduced to please which you have so often offended God.

No, my God, I will never more offend Thee. Too many already have been my offences. Enlighten me and strengthen me against temptations.

2. Then will your hair, cheeks, and lips fall off from your skull; your ribs will first be laid bare, and soon after your corrupted arms and legs. The worms, after having consumed all your flesh, will at last be consumed themselves. After this, nothing will remain of you but a mouldering skeleton, which in time will all fall to pieces; the head will be separated from the trunk, and the bones from one another. See then what man is, considered as a mortal being.

O Jesus! have pity on me. For how many years past have I deserved to burn in hell! I have forsaken Thee, my God, but Thou hast not yet forsaken me. Pardon me, I beseech Thee, and suffer me not any more to abandon Thee; and, when temptations assault me, may I ever have recourse to Thee.

3. Behold, finally, that gay young warrior who a little while ago was considered the life and soul of society; where is he now? Enter his house; he dwells there no longer. His bed is occupied by another, and others have already seized and divided his spoils and armor. If you would see him, look into that newly made grave and you will behold a putrid mass of corruption, horrible and offensive. Saints of God, happy indeed are you, who, for the love of God, whom alone you loved in this world, were wise enough to mortify your bodies; now your bones are honored upon altars, and your souls happy in the enjoyment of God face to face. Your bodies at the last day will again be united with your souls, to be your companions in bliss as they were formerly your companions in suffering.

O God! I do not lament, but rejoice, that this my flesh, for which I have so often offended Thee, will one day be given to rottenness and worms: but I do indeed

lament the crimes I have committed against Thee, for Thou art infinite goodness. O Jesus! I love Thee, and will never, nevermore offend Thee. Mary, mother of God, pray for me.

MEDITATION LXVIII.

Man is soon Forgotten after Death.

1. A young person has died early in life. A little while ago he was courted in conversation, and everywhere welcomed by all; but now that he is dead, he is become the horror of those who behold him. His parents are in haste to get him out of the house, and call in bearers to carry him to the grave. How wretched, if, to satisfy his parents or others of this world, he has lost God!

My dear Redeemer, though all may forget me, Thou wilt still remember me, for Thou hast given Thy life for my salvation. Oh that I had never offended Thee!

2. A little while ago the fame of his wit, gracefulness, urbanity, and facetiousness was spread far and wide; but now that he is dead he is almost out of mind and will soon be quite forgotten. Upon hearing the news of his death, some may remark of him, "He did himself great credit;" others may exclaim, "Oh, how sad! What a clever, facetious, and delightful man he was!" Some may grieve for him because he was pleasant or useful to them; while others may perhaps rejoice, because his death may be of advantage to them; but in a short time no one will so much as mention him. Even his parents and nearest relatives do not like to hear him spoken of, that their grief for him may not be renewed; and hence in visits of condolence everything is made the subject of conversation but the person who is dead; and if any one begins to allude to him, he is immediately stopped with an exclamation, "Pray do not mention him to

me!" See what becomes of the affection of our parents and friends for us in this world!

My God, I am content that Thou alone shouldst love me, and will for the future love only Thee.

3. Your relatives will at first be afflicted at your death, but it will not be long before they will console themselves with the portion of your property which may fall to their lot; and in the same room in which your soul departed and was judged by Jesus Christ, they will feast, jest, dance, and laugh as before, and who knows where your soul will be?

Give me, O Lord! time to lament the offences I have committed against Thee before Thou summonest me to judgment. I will no longer resist Thy calls: who knows but that this meditation may be the last call I may receive? I confess that I have deserved hell, and as many hells as I have committed mortal sins; but Thou wilt not despise poor penitent sinners. I am sincerely sorry with my whole soul for having abused Thy infinite goodness by sensual gratifications. Forgive me and grant me grace to obey Thee and to love Thee till the end of my life. O Mary! I place myself under thy protection, and confide in thy holy intercession.

MEDITATION LXIX.

The Appearance of all Mankind in the Valley of Josaphat.

1. *The angels shall go out, and shall separate the wicked from among the just.*[1] What would be the confusion of a person who, on entering into a church in the presence of a great concourse of people, should be forcibly expelled as one excommunicated! Alas! how much greater will the ignominy of the reprobate be to see themselves

[1] "Exibunt Angeli, et separabunt malos de medio justorum."—*Matt.* xiii. 49.

in the day of judgment expelled from the company of the saints in presence of all mankind! In this life the wicked are honored equally with the saints, and frequently more. But in that day, when the figure of this world passes away, the elect will be placed on the right hand, and caught up into the air to meet Jesus Christ, advancing to place crowns of glory on their heads, according to the words of the Apostle, *Then shall we be taken up together with them in the clouds to meet Christ in the air.*[1] But the wicked, surrounded by their tormentors, the infernal spirits, will be placed on the left hand, waiting for the appearance of the judge coming publicly to condemn them. O foolish worldlings! you who now hold the lives of the saints in derision and contempt,—in the valley of Josaphat, you will change your sentiments. There will you acknowledge your folly, but it will be too late.

2. Oh, what a splendid appearance will the saints make, on that day, who have forsaken all for God! How beautiful will be the appearance of the many young persons who, despising the riches and delights of the world, have shut themselves up in deserts or in cloisters, to attend only to their eternal salvation! And of the many martyrs who were so much despised and so cruelly tortured by the tyrants of this world! All these will be proclaimed courtiers of Jesus Christ in his heavenly glory. On the contrary, what a horrible appearance will a Herod make, or a Pilate, a Nero, or many others, who made so great a figure in this world, but died under God's displeasure!

O Jesus, I embrace Thy holy cross. What are riches, what are honors, what is the whole world? Besides Thee, what do I desire?

3. Christian, what will be your station at the last day?

[1] "Rapiemur cum illis in nubibus obviam Christo in aera."—1 *Thess.* iv. 16.

the right hand or the left? If you would occupy the right, you must walk in the way which conducts thither; it is impossible to keep the way to the left, and at length arrive at the right.

O Lamb of God! who didst come into the world to take away our sins, have pity on me. I am sorry for having offended Thee, and will love Thee above all things; suffer me not to offend Thee any more. I seek not worldly goods; give me only Thy grace and Thy love, and I ask for nothing more. O Mary, thou art my refuge and my hope.

MEDITATION LXX.

The Blindness of those who say, If we be Lost we shall not be Lost alone.

1. What do you say? that if you go to hell you will not go alone? But what consolation will the company of the wicked be to you in hell? Every condemned soul in hell weeps and laments, saying, Although I am condemned to suffer forever, would that I might suffer alone! The wretched company which you will meet with there will increase your torments by their despairing groans and moanings. What a torment to hear even a dog howling all night long, or an infant crying for five or six hours, and not to be able to sleep! And what will it be to hear the yells and howlings of so many wretched souls in despair, who will continually torment one another with their dismal noises, and this, not for one night, nor for many nights only, but for all eternity!

2. Again, your companions will but increase the torments of hell, by the stench of their burning carcasses. *Out of their carcasses*, saith the prophet Isaias, *shall a stench arise*.[1] They are called carcasses, not because they are dead, for they are alive to pain, but because of the

[1] "De cadaveribus eorum ascendet fœtor."—*Isa.* xxxiv. 3.

stench which they will emit. Your companions will also increase the torments of hell by their numbers; they will be in that pit as grapes in the wine-press of the anger of God: *He treadeth*, said St. John, *the wine-press of the fierceness of the wrath of God the Almighty.*[1] They will be straitened on every side, so as to be unable to move hand or foot so long as God shall be God.

3. O accursed sin! how canst thou so blind men who are gifted with reason? Sinners, who affect to despise damnation, are yet more careful to preserve their goods, their situations, and their health; they do not say, "If I lose my property, my place, my health, I shall not be the only one who will lose such things." Yet when the soul is at stake, they say, "If I be lost, I shall not be lost alone!" He who loses the good things of this world and saves his soul will find a recompense for all he has lost; but he who loses his soul, what indemnity will he find? *What shall he give in exchange for his soul?*[2]

O my God, enlighten me and do not forsake me. How often have I sold my soul to the devil, and exchanged Thy grace and favor for a wretched transitory indulgence of sense! I am sorry, O God! for having thus dishonored Thy infinite majesty. My God, I love Thee: suffer me not to lose Thee any more. O Mary, Mother of God! deliver me from hell, and from the guilt of sin by thy holy intercession.

MEDITATION LXXI.

The Measure of Grace.

1. There is a certain measure beyond which God does not bestow his graces upon us. We should therefore be very much afraid of abusing any of the graces which

[1] "Et ipse calcat torcular vini furoris iræ Dei."—*Apoc.* xix. 15.

[2] "Quam dabit homo commutationem pro anima sua?"—*Matt.* xvi. 26.

our Lord dispenses to us. Every grace, every light, every call, may be the last we shall receive from God, and by despising it we may lose our souls.

O my God! Thou hast already bestowed too many graces upon me, and too often have I abused them. Have mercy on me, and do not yet abandon me.

2. This measure is not the same for all persons; but for some greater, for others less. Christian brother, think how many graces you have received from God; and if you continue to abuse them, will you be saved? Reflect that the more abundant the graces have been which God has granted you, the more should you fear lest he abandon you in your sins, and the more should you be resolved upon a change of life. It may be that by one more mortal sin you may close against you the gates of mercy, and ruin your soul forever. And it may not be so. But you should very much fear lest it should be so. And miserable are you if you do not thus fear.

No, my God, I desire nevermore to lose Thee. Whenever the devil shall tempt me, I will have recourse to Thee, my Jesus; I know that Thou art ever ready to assist those who fly to Thee for help.

3. The greater the graces, the greater is the ingratitude of him who abuses them. The graces which you have reeeived should induce you to hope that the Lord will pardon you if you amend your life and remain faithful to him for the future. But they should also make you fear lest God should condemn you to hell, if after so many offences you continue still to provoke him by sin.

O God! I give Thee thanks for not having even yet forsaken me. The light which Thou at present impartest to me, the displeasure which I feel for having offended Thee, the desire which I have to love Thee and to continue in Thy grace, are certain signs that Thou hast not yet abandoned me. And since Thou hast not abandoned me after so many sins, I desire nevermore to

abandon Thee, who art the God of my soul. I love Thee above all things; and because I love Thee, I am sorry for having despised Thee. Through Thy sacred Passion I beseech Thee, O Jesus! to grant me perseverance. Holy Mary, queen of mercy, take me under thy protection.

MEDITATION LXXII.

Loving God because He has Died for us.

1. *He loved me*, saith the Apostle, *and delivered Himself for me.*[1] When was a master ever known to lay down his life for the love of his servant? or a king for the love of his slave? And yet it is certainly true that my Creator, the Lord of heaven and earth, the Son of God, has of his own will laid down his life for the love of me his vile and ungrateful creature. St. Bernard says, "He spared not himself that he might spare his servant."[2] To pardon me, he would not pardon himself, but condemned himself to die in torments upon a cross.

I believe, O Jesus! that Thou hast died for me, and how has it been possible for me to have lived so many years without loving Thee?

2. But, my Redeemer, Thou hast given Thy life not only for a vile creature, but for a rebellious and ungrateful creature, who has oftentimes turned his back upon Thee, and for some base gratification renounced Thy grace and Thy love. Thou hast sought by the most endearing motives to make me love Thee; and I have sought to make Thee hate me and condemn me to hell. Nevertheless, that same love which induced Thee to die for me, now induces me to hope that Thou wilt not reject me if I return to Thee. Pardon me, O Jesus! I

[1] "Dilexit me, et tradidit semetipsum pro me."—*Gal.* ii. 20.

[2] "Ut servum redimeret, sibi Filius ipse non pepercit."—*S. de Pass. D.*

am sensible of the wrong which I have done Thee; and I know also the wrong I should still do Thee, were I to love Thee only in a slight degree: no, I will love Thee to the utmost of my power; too much hast Thou deserved such a love. Grant me Thy help and assistance.

3, Ah, my Saviour, what more couldst Thou have done to gain my heart than Thou hast done by dying for my sake? What greater love couldst Thou have shown for Thy friend than to die for the love of him? *Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends.*[1] Since then, O Word incarnate, Thou canst do nothing more to make me love Thee, shall I continue to be ungrateful to Thee? No, death is approaching, and is perhaps very near me, and I will not die so ungrateful to Thee as I hitherto have been. I love Thee, my beloved Jesus. Thou hast given Thyself entirely to me; I will give myself entirely to Thee. Bind and straighten me with the bonds of Thy love, so that I may live and die in the love of Thy infinite goodness. O sacred Mother Mary! take me under Thy protection, and teach me to burn with the love of thy divine Son, who died on the cross for the love of me.

MEDITATION LXXIII.

The Care of our Salvation.

1. The devil makes salvation appear to some too difficult to be accomplished, in order to dishearten them and induce them to abandon themselves to a disorderly life. It is true that if to obtain salvation it were necessary to retire into a desert, or to shut one's self up in a cloister, we ought to do so. But these extraordinary means are not necessary; ordinary means are sufficient,

[1] "Majorem hac dilectionem nemo habet, ut animam suam ponat quis pro amicis suis."—*John*, xv. 13.

such as the frequentation of the sacraments, the avoiding of dangerous occasions, and the frequently recommending of ourselves by prayer to God. At our death we shall see that these things were easy; hence will our remorse be very great if until then we have neglected them.

2. We should resolve and say, "I will save my soul, cost what it may." Perish all things else—property, friends, and even life itself—if I can but only save my soul! Let us never think we can do too much to obtain eternal salvation. Eternity is at stake, the being happy or miserable forever. "No security can be too great," says St. Bernard, "where eternity is at stake." [1]

O God! I am ashamed to appear before Thee; how often for a mere nothing have I turned my back upon Thee! No, I will nevermore forfeit Thy grace, nor wilfully become Thine enemy. *In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped; let me not be confounded forever.*[2] I would rather a thousand times lose my life than lose Thy friendship.

3. If during the past we have forfeited salvation, we must now endeavor to remedy the evil; we must change our lives, and this without delay. It is to no purpose to say I will do so in a short time. Hell is filled with souls who formerly said the same; but death surprised them, and prevented their proceedings. What a favor would God bestow upon a dying man on the point of breathing his last, were he to grant him one more year, or even one more month! Christian brother, at this very time, God bestows such a favor upon you, and what use do you make of it?

Why, O God, do I delay? Do I wait for the period when there will be no more time for me, and when I shall find that I have in reality done nothing for Thee? I have the consolation of being as yet assisted by Thy

[1] Nulla nimia securitas, ubi periclitatur æternitas.

[2] "In te, Domine, speravi; non confundar in æternum."—*Ps.* xxx. 2.

grace. I love Thee above every good, and desire rather to die than to offend Thee. But Thou knowest my weakness, and the many treasons I have been guilty of against Thee. Help me, O Jesus! in Thee do I place all my hopes; and to Thee, O Mary, Mother of God! do I fly for protection.

MEDITATION LXXIV.

The Leaving of All at Death.

1. Christians are well aware that they must die, yet for the most part they live as though they were never to die. If after this life there were no other life, if there were neither hell nor heaven, could they think less of death than they now do? If, dear Christian, you desire to live well, endeavor to spend the remainder of your days in the continual remembrance of death. Oh, how correctly does he judge of things, and how rightly does he direct all his actions, who performs them with a view to his departure hence! The remembrance of death destroys in him all affection to the good things of this world, by reminding him that he must soon leave them all behind him.

O God! since Thou givest me time to remedy the evil which I have done, make known to me Thy will, and I will do all that Thou requirest of me.

2. If a traveller, on his journey to his own country, were to stop and spend his all in building a palace in a land through which he ought only to pass, and neglect to provide a dwelling for himself in that country in which he was to reside his whole life, he would be thought mad. And must not the Christian be deemed mad who thinks only of gratifying himself in this world, through which he has only to pass during a few days, and heeds not the danger of being miserable in the next, where he must live forever, as long as God shall be God?

Woe to me, O God! if Thou hadst called me out of life in my sins! I thank Thee for having borne with me with such great patience. Never suffer me to be again separated from Thee. My God, my sovereign good, I do and will love Thee above all things.

3. Death will rob us of all things. Whatever we may have acquired in this world we must leave all behind us at our death. Nothing will then be allowed us but a coffin and a shroud, which will soon moulder away and become dust with our bodies. We must then leave the house which we now inhabit, and a dismal grave must be the dwelling-place of our bodies until the day of judgment, when they must go either to heaven or to hell, accordingly as our souls have gone before them.

All things will therefore end with me in death. Then shall I find that nothing will remain for me but the little which I have done for God. And were I to die this moment, what should I find that I have done for Thee, my Jesus? For what do I delay? that death may come and find me thus miserable? No, my God, I will amend my life. I detest all the offences I have ever committed against Thee. For the future I will not seek to gratify my own inclinations, but solely to do Thy will, who art the God of my soul. I love Thee, O infinite goodness! I love Thee above all things; mercifully grant me Thy grace. And do thou also, Mary, Mother of God, pray to thy divine Son for me.

MEDITATION LXXV.

The Moment of Death.

1. Imagine yourself, dear Christian, just now dead, and your soul entered into eternity. If now you had just departed from this world, what would you not wish to have done for life eternal? But what would such

wishes avail you, if you had not spent the days of your mortal life in serving God? If you would now prevent that which you have time to prevent, place yourself in imagination frequently for the future in your grave, or rather upon your death-bed; imagine yourself to be dying, on the point of breathing your last, listen to the reproaches of your conscience and delay not to silence them by repentance. Delay not, for you have no time to lose.

Ah, my God! enlighten me, make known to me the way in which I should walk, and I will obey Thee in all things.

2. St. Camillus de Lellis, looking at the graves of the dead, was accustomed to say, "If those who are here interred could now return to life again, what would they not do to become saints! And I who have time at my disposal, what do I do for God?" Thus did this saint animate himself to become more and more closely united with his Lord. Know then, dear Christian, that the time which God in his mercy now grants you is of the greatest value. Do not wait for time to labor for your salvation until you are gone into eternity, or until the arrival of that awful moment when it will be said to you, "Depart, Christian soul, out of this world;" make haste to go forth, for there is no more time for you to labor: what is done is done.

O Jesus! remember that I am the lost sheep for which Thou hast laid down Thy life. "We beseech Thee, therefore, help Thy servants, whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy precious blood." Give me light and grace to do that now which I shall wish to have done at the hour of my death.

3. O eternal God! I tremble at the thought of being that unhappy tree of which Thou hast said: *Behold for these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and I find none. Cut it down therefore: why cumbereth it the*

ground?[1] Yet so it is, O Lord! for the many years I have now lived upon this earth, what good have I hitherto done? What fruit have I borne Thee all this time, but sin and bitterness? Alas! how have I deserved to have dwelt long ago in hell! Dearest Redeemer, spare me yet a little longer; I will not be obstinate; death will never find me in the state in which I now am. I will deplore and detest the days which I have spent in offending Thee, and will pass the remainder of my life in loving and honoring Thy infinite goodness. I do and will love Thee, my sovereign good. Take not Thy help away from me. And thou, O Blessed Virgin Mary, deprive me not of thy powerful protection.

MEDITATION LXXVI.

The Examination of our Sins at the Last Day.

1. Behold the heavens will open, and the angels and saints will descend to be present at the judgment followed by the Queen of Heaven, the ever blessed Virgin, and after her will appear the eternal Judge of the living and of the dead, encompassed with great power and majesty. The appearance of Jesus will be to the just the greatest consolation; but to the wicked, the indignant countenance of the Son of God will be horror and confusion worse than hell itself. *They will say to the mountains: Fall upon us, and hide us from the wrath of the Lamb.*[2] They will desire that the mountains may immediately fall upon them rather than behold the indignant countenance of the Lamb, that is, of the Redeemer, who in their lifetime was as a lamb

[1] "Ecce, anni tres sunt, ex quo venio quærens fructum in ficulnea hac, et non invenio."—*Luke*, xiii. 7.

[2] "Dicunt montibus et petris: Cadite super nos, et abscondite nos a facie sedentis super thronum et ab ira Agni."—*Apoc.* vi. 16.

towards them, in silently bearing with their repeated injuries against him.

O Jesus! Thou who wilt one day be my Judge; I am heartily sorry for having so grievously offended Thee. Pardon me my sins, and grant that when Thou appearest as my Judge, I may not behold Thee indignant against me.

2. *The judgment sat, and the books were opened.*[1] Then will it be impossible to conceal our sins; Jesus himself, who will be our Judge, having long ago witnessed them, will manifest them to the whole world. *He will bring to light the hidden things of darkness.*[2] Even the most secret sins, the most abominable impurities, and cruelties the most horrible, he will make known to all mankind.

O my Redeemer! Thou who already knowest all my iniquities, have mercy on me now, before the time of mercy ends.

3. In a word, Jesus Christ will on that day make himself known as the great Lord of all: *The Lord shall be known,* says the Psalmist, *when he executeth judgment.*[3] At present more account is made of some pleasure, of a mere vapor, of a fit of passion, than of God. Hence will the Judge then justly say to the sinner, *To whom have ye likened me, or made me equal?*[4] To what have you compared me and postponed me? Have your base inclinations, or a mere caprice, prevailed with you more than my grace? O God! what shall we then answer to such reproaches? Oh, how will our utter confusion close our mouths! But let us now answer and say:

O Jesus! I know that Thou wilt one day be my Judge, but now Thou art my Saviour. Remember that Thou hast died for me. I am sorry with my whole heart for

[1] "Judicium sedit, et libri aperti sunt."—*Dan.* vii. 10.

[2] "Illuminabit abscondita tenebrarum."—1 *Cor.* iv. 5.

[3] "Cognoscetur Dominus judicia faciens."—*Ps.* ix. 17.

[4] "Cui assimilastis me? . . . dicit Sanctus."—*Isa.* xl. 25.

having despised Thee, my sovereign good. But if hitherto I have despised Thee, behold I now esteem and love Thee more than myself, and am willing to die for Thy love. O Jesus! pardon me, and never suffer me to live any more deprived of Thy love. Mary, most gracious advocate of sinners, help me now whilst I can yet receive thy powerful assistance.

MEDITATION LXVII.

The Great Love of God for our Souls.

1. The love which God bears our souls is eternal and infinite. *I have loved thee with an everlasting love.*[1] So that God has from all eternity loved every human soul. For the salvation of souls he placed all other creatures in the world: *All things for the sake of the elect.*[2] And lastly he sent his only Son into the world, made man for our sake, to die upon the cross for the salvation of our souls.

Thou, O God! hast indeed loved me from all eternity, and hast died for me, and how could I ever so grievously offend Thee?

2. The only begotten Son of God, for the love of our souls, came down from heaven to free them from eternal death by his own death upon the cross; and having redeemed them with his blood, he called his angels to rejoice with him for the recovery of his lost sheep: *Rejoice with Me, because I have found the sheep that was lost.*[3]

Dearest Redeemer, Thou didst come to seek me, and how have I hitherto fled away from Thee. No, my Jesus! I will no more fly from Thee. I will love Thee; and oh! do Thou so bind me to Thee by Thy holy love that I may live and die in Thy sacred embraces.

[1] "In charitate perpetua dilexi te."—*Jer.* xxxi. 3.

[2] "Omnia . . . propter electos."—2 *Tim.* ii. 10.

[3] "Congratulamini mihi, quia inveni ovem meam quæ perierat."—*Luke*, xv. 6.

3. The eternal Father has then given his Son, and the divine Son has given his precious blood and life for the salvation of my soul; and how often have I withdrawn myself from God and sold myself for something worse than nothing to his and my mortal enemy the devil!

Verily, my God! Thou hast spared nothing to save me from being lost, while I, for the sake of some paltry gratification, have many, many times renounced Thy friendship and love. Thou hast borne with me, that I might have time to bewail my sins and to love Thee, the God of my soul. I will therefore love Thee, my only good, and will grieve above every evil for having so often offended Thee. Oh! suffer me not to be any more separated from Thy love. Remind me continually how much Thou hast done for my salvation, and how great has been the love which Thou hast shown me, that I may never cease to love Thee, my treasure, my life, and my all. Grant that I may ever love Thee, and then dispose of me as Thou pleasest. Mary, Mother of God, thy divine Son denies thee nothing; recommend to him, I beseech thee, my sinful soul.

MEDITATION LXXVIII.

The Remorse of the Reprobate.

1. The condemned soul is tormented with three kinds of remorse. The first arises from reflecting for what a mere trifle it has incurred everlasting misery. For how long does the pleasure of sin last? only for a moment. To a man at the point of death, how long does his past life appear? a mere moment. But to one in hell, what do the fifty or sixty years of his sojourning upon the earth appear, when, in the gulf of eternity, he foresees that after a hundred or a thousand millions of years he will be only beginning eternity? Alas! does he exclaim, for a few moments of indulgence in poisonous pleasures,

which I did but just taste, I must forever suffer, lament, and despair in this fiery furnace, abandoned by all, as long as God shall be God.

O my God! I give Thee thanks for Thy great mercy to me, and implore Thee still to have mercy on me.

2. The second kind of remorse arises from the reflection of the condemned soul on the little which it need have done to be saved, but did not do it; and that now there is no remedy. Alas! does it say, if I had frequently confessed my sins, given myself to prayer, restored that ill-gotten property, pardoned my enemies, avoided that dangerous occasion, I should not have been lost. What would it have cost me? Although it might have cost me much, yet I ought to have been most willing to do my utmost to be saved. But I did not do it, and now I am lost forever. With how many inspirations did God favor me! How many times did he call me and admonish me that unless I desisted I should certainly be lost! I might then have remedied my past iniquity, but now I have no remedy. Ah! how does this thought afflict the wretched soul, even more than the fire and all the other torments of hell, that it might have been happy forever, but now must be miserable for all eternity!

O Jesus! it is now the time of mercy; do Thou mercifully pardon me. I love Thee, my sovereign good, and am exceedingly sorry for having ever despised Thee.

3. The third and most bitter kind of remorse arises from the consciousness of the wretched soul of the great happiness which it has forfeited through its own fault. It recollects that God afforded it abundant means of gaining heaven, that he died for its salvation, permitted it to be born in the bosom of the true Church, and bestowed upon it numberless graces, and it reflects that all have been rendered useless through its own fault. I am lost, it exclaims, and neither the merits of Jesus Christ, nor

the intercession of the Mother of God, nor the prayers of the saints, are of any avail to me; every gleam of hope is vanished from me forever.

Oh that I had died, my God, rather than ever offended Thee! Receive me now into Thy favor; I love Thee, and will love Thee forever. Mary, most gracious advocate of sinners, intercede for me.

MEDITATION LXXIX.

Jesus, the King of Love.

1. St. Fulgentius, contemplating the Infant Jesus flying into Egypt from the hands of Herod, who through fear of losing his kingdom sought the infant's life, tenderly exclaims, "Why art thou thus troubled, O Herod? The King who is just now born comes not to overthrow other kings by force of arms, but to subjugate them by dying for them."[1] As though he had said, The King of heaven is not come to conquer us by war, but by love; he is not come to put us to death, but to rescue us from death by dying for us. Hence it is that Jesus may indeed be styled the King of love.

Oh that I had always loved Thee, O Jesus, my sovereign King! and had never offended Thee! Thou didst spend thirty-three years in pain and labor to save me from being lost, and I have wilfully renounced Thee, my sovereign good, for the sake of momentary pleasures. Father of mercy, forgive me, and embrace me with the kiss of peace.

2. Ungrateful Jews! why did you refuse to acknowledge for your king one so lovely and so loving towards you? Why did you exclaim, *We have no king but Cæsar?*[2]

[1] "Quid est quod sic turbaris, Herodes? Rex iste qui natus est, non venit reges pugnando superare, sed moriendo subjugare."—*S. de Epiph. et Inn. nece.*

[2] "Non habemus regem nisi Cæsarem."—*John*, xix. 15.

Cæsar did not love you, nor desire to die for you; while your true King had descended from heaven upon the earth to die for the love of you.

O sweet Saviour! if others will not receive Thee as their King, I will have no other King but Thee: "Thou art my King."[1] I know that Thou alone lovest me; Thou alone hast redeemed me with Thy blood; where then shall I find one who has loved me as Thou hast loved me? I am grieved for having hitherto rejected Thee as my King, by losing my respect for Thee and rebelling against Thee. Pardon me, O Jesus, my King! for Thou hast died to purchase pardon for me.

3. *To this end Christ died and arose again; that he might be Lord of the dead and of the living.*[2]

My beloved King, dearest Jesus, since Thou camest upon earth to gain our hearts to Thyself, if hitherto I have resisted Thy loving calls, I will now no longer resist them. Do not disdain to accept me; I now give myself to Thee, I give Thee my whole self. Take, O King! possession of my whole will, and of my whole self; make me faithful to Thee; and grant that I may rather die than betray Thee any more, my King, my love and only good. O Queen, and Mother of my King! O Mary, obtain for me that fidelity which I this day promise to thy divine Son.

MEDITATION LXXX.

The Miserable Death of the Sinner.

1. Poor unhappy being! see how he is oppressed with sorrows! Alas! he is now about to die; a cold sweat is stealing over him, his breath is failing him, and he frequently faints away; and when come to himself, his

[1] Rex meus es tu.

[2] "In hoc enim Christus mortuus est et resurrexit, ut et mortuorum et vivorum dominetur."—*Rom.* xiv. 9.

head is so far gone and so weak that he can attend but to very little, understand but little, and speak but little. But the worst is, although he is drawing near his end, instead of thinking of the account he must shortly render to God, he thinks only of his medical attendants, and of the remedies they may be able to afford him to save him from death. And those who stand around him, instead of exhorting him to unite himself to God, flatter him by telling him that he is better, or say not a word, that they may not disturb him.

O my God! deliver me from such an unhappy end.

2. But at last the priest admonishes him of his approaching dissolution, saying to him, "You are now, dear brother, in a state of great danger, and must bid farewell to the world; give yourself then to God, and receive his holy sacraments." On hearing this fatal announcement, how dreadfully is he agitated, what sadness and remorse of conscience overwhelm him, and how dreadful is the conflict which he suffers! All the sins he has committed appear in confusion before him, the inspirations which he has neglected, his broken promises, and the many years of his past life now lost and gone forever, all rush upon his mind. He now opens his eyes to the truths of eternity, of which during his past life he made but very little account. O God! what terror do the thoughts of loss of Thy favor, of death, of judgment, of hell, and of eternity, strike into his unhappy soul!

O Jesus! have pity on me and pardon me; do not abandon me. I am sensible of the evil I have done in despising Thee, and would willingly die for Thy love. Assist me, O God! to begin now at least a new life.

3. The dying sinner exclaims, "O what great folly have I been guilty of! How have I squandered away my life! I might have been a saint, and I would not; and now, what can I do? My head wanders, and fears oppress me and will not suffer me to bring my mind

to any one good work! In a few moments what will become of me? Dying in this manner, how can I be saved?" He wishes for time to make his peace effectually with God, but time is no longer his. "Alas!" he cries out, "this cold sweat is a sure symptom of the near approach of death; I begin to lose my sight and my breath; I can no longer move, I can hardly speak." And thus, in the midst of so much confusion, despondency, and fear, his soul departs from his body and appears before Jesus Christ.

O my Jesus! Thy death is my hope. I love Thee above every good, and because I love Thee, I am sorry for having offended Thee. Mary, Mother of God, pray to Jesus for me.

MEDITATION LXXXI.

The Happy Death of the Just.

1. To the just man death is not a punishment, but a reward; it is not dreaded by him, but desired. How can it be dreadful to him if it is to terminate all his pains, afflictions, and conflicts, and all danger of losing God? Those words, "Depart, Christian soul, out of this world,"[1] which strike such terror into the soul of the sinner, fill the soul that loves God with joy. The just man is not afflicted at leaving the good things of this world, because God has always been his only good; not at leaving honors, because he has always regarded them as smoke; not at being separated from his friends and relatives, because he has always loved them in God and for God. Hence, as in life he frequently exclaimed, "My God and my all!" he now repeats the same in death, with ecstasies of delight; the time being at hand for him to return to his God who made him, to love him face to face forever and ever in heaven.

[1] Proficiscere, anima Christiana, de hoc mundo.

2. The sorrows of death do not afflict him; he even rejoices to sacrifice the last remnants of his life as a testimony of his love for God, uniting the sufferings of his death to the sufferings of Jesus when dying on the cross. The thought that the time of sin and the danger of losing God are now past overwhelms him with delight. The devil fails not to suggest to his mind thoughts of despondency at the recollection of his past sins; but as he has for many years bewailed them, and loved Jesus Christ with his whole heart, he is not dismayed, but comforted.

O Jesus! how good and faithful art Thou to a soul that seeks and loves Thee!

3. As the sinner who dies in mortal sin experiences, in the internal troubles and rage which he suffers in death, a foretaste of hell; so does the just man experience in death a foretaste of heaven. His acts of confidence and of the love of God, and his ardent desire to see God, afford him a beginning of that happiness which is soon to be completed for him in heaven. With what gladness does he welcome the holy Viaticum when brought into his chamber! He exclaims like St. Philip Neri when he was on his death-bed, "Because I have offended Thee, my God, I will say to Thee, with St. Bernard, 'Thy wounds are my merits.'"

O my God! if I am in Thy grace, as I hope I am, grant me soon to die, that I may presently behold and love Thee face to face, and be secure of nevermore losing Thee. Mary, my Mother, obtain for me a holy death.

MEDITATION LXXXII.

At the Point of Death.

1. If now you were at the point of death, already in your agony and almost breathing your last, and about to appear before the divine tribunal, what would you

not wish to have done for God? And what would you not give for a little more time to make your salvation more secure? Woe to me, if I do not make use of the light that is now given me, and amend my life! *He hath called against me the time.*[1] The time which is now granted me by the mercy of God will be a great torment and a subject of bitter remorse to me at the hour of death, when time for me will be no more.

O Jesus! Thou didst spend Thy whole life for my salvation, and I have been many years in the world, and yet what have I hitherto done for Thee? Alas! all that I have done gives me only pain and remorse of conscience.

2. Christian, God now gives Thee time, be then resolved: in what will you spend it? What do you wait for? Do you wait to see that light which will show you your wretched neglect, when there will be no remedy? Do you wait to hear that "Go forth" which must be obeyed without demur?

O my God! I will no longer abuse the light which Thou affordest me; but which I have hitherto so much abused. I thank Thee for this fresh admonition, which may be the last Thou wilt ever give me. But since at present Thou thus enlightenest me, it is a mark that Thou hast not yet abandoned me, and art desirous of showing me mercy. My beloved Saviour, I am sorry above all things for having so often despised Thy graces and neglected Thy calls and inspirations. I promise with Thy help nevermore to offend Thee.

3. O God! how many Christians die in the greatest uncertainty as to their salvation, and tormented with the thought that they have had time to serve Thee, and are now arrived at the end of their life, when no more time is left them for any good works! They are sensible that now all that remains to them is to render a strict account

[1] "Vocavit adversum me tempus."—*Lam.* i. 15.

of the many graces and inspirations bestowed upon them by God, and know not what to answer.

O Lord! I will not die under such a torment. Say what Thou requirest of me, make known to me the way of life in which I should walk, and I will obey Thee in all things. Hitherto I have despised Thy commands, but I am now sorry for it with my whole heart, and love Thee above all things. O Mary, refuge of sinners! recommend my soul to thy divine Son.

MEDITATION LXXXIII.

The Rashness of the Sinner in Committing Mortal Sin.

1. God cannot but hate mortal sin, because mortal sin is directly opposed to his divine will: "Sin," says St. Bernard, "would destroy the divine will."[1] As he cannot but hate mortal sin, so he cannot but hate the sinner who identifies himself with sin and rebels against his God: *To God the wicked and his wickedness are hateful alike.*[2] How great then is the rashness of the sinner in committing sin, when he knows that by so doing he will bring upon himself the hatred of God!

O my God! have mercy on me; Thou hast distinguished me with many graces, and I have repaid Thee with numerous offences; no one has so grievously offended Thee as I have done. Grant me, for Thy mercy's sake, contrition for my sins.

2. God is that all-powerful being who by a single act of his will created all things: *He commanded and they were made.*[3] And he can in like manner, by a single act of his will, destroy all that he has created, whenever he pleases:

[1] Peccatum est destructivum divinæ voluntatis.

[2] "Similiter autem odio sunt Deo impius et impietas ejus."—*Wis.* xiv. 9.

[3] "Quoniam ipse dixit, et facta sunt."—*Ps.* xxxii. 9.

At a beck he can utterly destroy the whole world.[1] And will the sinner have the hardihood to put himself in opposition to this omnipotent God and make him his enemy? *He hath stretched out his hand*, says holy Job, *against God, and hath strengthened himself against the Almighty.*[2] What should we think of an ant pretending to fight against an armed soldier?

And what ought to be said of me, O eternal God! who have so often dared to oppose myself to Thee, making no account of Thy power, and sensible that I was drawing down Thy anger upon me? But Thy holy Passion, O Jesus, gives me confidence to hope in Thee for pardon, who didst die to obtain forgiveness for me.

3. The rashness of the sinner increases when we reflect that he offends God before his own eyes: *He provoketh Me to anger before My face.*[3] What subject had ever the audacity to break the laws in the presence of the king himself? But the sinner knows that God beholds him, and yet he does not hesitate to commit sin before him.

My dear Redeemer, I am that audacious being who has dared to despise Thy holy precepts before Thy face. I have therefore deserved hell; but Thou art my Saviour, who camest to take away the sins of the world and to save poor sinners: *The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.*[4] How much am I grieved for having offended Thee! Thou hast given me many proofs of Thy love, and I have returned Thee as many injuries. O Jesus! put an end to my sins, and replenish me with Thy love. I love Thee, O infinite love! and

[1] "Potest . . . et universum mundum uno nutu delere."—2 *Mach.* viii. 18.

[2] "Tetendit enim adversus Deum manum suam, et contra Omnipotentem roboratus est."—*Job*, xv. 25.

[3] "Ad iracundiam provocat me ante faciem meam semper."—*Isa.* lxv. 3.

[4] "Venit enim Filius hominis quærere et salvum facere quod perierat."—*Luke*, xix. 10.

tremble at the thought of being ever again deprived of Thy love. Permit it not, O God! rather let me die. O Mary, thou obtainest whatever thou askest of God; obtain for me the gift of holy perseverance.

MEDITATION LXXXIV.

The Parable of the Prodigal Son.

1. St. Luke writes (chap. xv.) that an ungrateful son, disdaining to remain in subjection to his father, went one day to demand from him his inheritance, that he might live as he pleased; and having obtained it, turned his back upon his father and went his way to live in vice in a far distant country. This prodigal son is a figure of the sinner, who, abusing the liberty which God has granted him, forsakes God, and lives in iniquity far away from him.

O my Lord, and my Father! this is what I have done, when to satisfy my capricious desires I have so often forsaken Thee, to live at a distance from Thee deprived of Thy grace.

2. But as it happened to the prodigal son, that, having left his father, he was reduced to so great misery that he was unable to satisfy himself with the husks which the swine refused to eat; so does it happen to the sinner. When he forsakes God, he can nowhere find contentment nor peace; because, at a distance from God, all the pleasures of the earth cannot satisfy his heart. The prodigal son, seeing himself reduced to such a state of misery, said within himself, *I will arise and go to my father.*[1] Do Thou, Christian, in like manner, arise from the filth of sin and return to your heavenly Father, who will not reject you.

Yes, my God, my Father, I confess that I have done evil in forsaking Thee; I am sorry for it and repent of

[1] Surgam, et ibo ad patrem meum.

it with my whole heart. Oh, do not cast me off now that I return to Thee penitent, and resolved nevermore to depart from before Thy feet. My dear Father, forgive me, pardon me, give me the kiss of peace and receive me into Thy favor.

3. The prodigal son, on his return, cast himself with humility at his father's feet and said, *Father, I am not worthy to be called thy son.*[1] Upon which his father embraced him with tenderness, and, forgetting all his past ingratitude, welcomed him with the greatest affection, and was overjoyed at regaining his son who was lost.

Most tender Father, suffer me to cast myself with sorrow at Thy feet, for my multiplied offences against Thee. I am not worthy to be called Thy son, having so many times forsaken and despised Thee; but I know that Thou art so good a parent that Thou wilt not reject a repentant child. If hitherto I have not loved Thee, I will now love Thee above all things, and will willingly undergo any suffering for Thy love. Assist me with Thy holy grace, that I may ever remain faithful to Thee. O Mary, God is my Father, thou art my Mother; be not forgetful of me.

MEDITATION LXXXV.

The Evil of Lukewarmness.

1. Great indeed is the evil which tepidity occasions in the souls of those who, while they have a dread of being in a state of mortal sin, make but little account of deliberate venial sins, and take no pains to avoid them. God threatens the lukewarm to vomit them out of his mouth: *Because thou art lukewarm I will begin to vomit thee out of My mouth.*[2] This means rejection on the part of God; and what is once rejected, in the way here men-

[1] Pater, . . . jam non sum dignus vocari filius tuus.

[2] "Quia tepidus es . . . incipiam te evomere."—*Apoc.* iii. 16.

tioned, is never received again. The tepid Christian dishonors God, by showing in his conduct that he does not consider God deserving of being served with the greatest attention.

Yes, my God! I have indeed hitherto dishonored Thee in this manner, but I will now amend my life; do Thou help and support me.

2. St. Teresa never fell into any grievous sin, as is related in the Bull of her canonization; yet it was revealed to her that a place was prepared for her in hell, if she did not shake off her tepidity. How was this? since it is only mortal sin that is punished in hell. The Holy Spirit supplies the answer, when he says, *He that despiseth small things shall fall by little and little.*[1] He who makes no account of deliberate venial sins will easily fall into those which are mortal; because by habitually offending Almighty God in small things he will not have much dread of sometimes offending him in great things; and because by continually withdrawing himself from God, he provokes God not to afford him those special helps without which he will easily be overcome by powerful temptations.

Abandon me not, O Lord, to such a misfortune; grant that I may rather die; have pity on me.

3. *He who soweth sparingly, shall also reap sparingly.*[2] With justice does God withhold his graces from the soul that loves and serves him slothfully. Hence saith the prophet, *Cursed is he who doeth the work of God deceitfully.*[3] He therefore who serves God deceitfully, must commit a great evil, since God curses him. The grievous sinner, conscious of his crimes, confesses them; but the tepid Christian, deeming himself to be better than others be-

[1] "Qui spernit modica, paulatim decidet."—*Ecclus.* xix. 1.

[2] "Qui parce seminat, parce et metet."—2 *Cor.* ix. 6.

[3] "Maledictus qui facit opus Dei fraudulenter."—*Jer.* xlviii. 10.

cause he is not guilty of great sins, lives on in the mire of his defects, and does not humble himself.

O my God! I have by my tepidity closed up the avenue of those graces which Thou wast willing to bestow upon me. Help me, O Lord! for I am resolved to amend my life. There is no reason why I should be sparing with Thee, who hast given Thy life for me. Holy Mary, Mother of God, help me; in thy patronage I confide.

MEDITATION LXXXVI.

The Giving of Ourselves to God without Reserve.

1. God has declared that he loves all those who love him: *I love them that love Me.*[1] But it is not to be supposed that God will give himself entirely to one who loves anything in the world equally with God. At one time St. Teresa was in this state, keeping up an affection, not indeed an impure affection, but an inordinate one, for a certain relative. When, however, she divested herself of this attachment, God was pleased to say to her in a vision, "Now that thou art wholly mine, I am wholly thine."

O my God! when will the day arrive when I shall be wholly Thine? Consume within me, I beseech Thee, by the flames of Thy divine love, all those earthly affections which hinder me from belonging entirely to Thee. When shall I be able to say to Thee with truth, My God, Thee only do I desire, and besides Thee there is nothing that I wish for?

2. *One is my dove, my perfect one is but one.*[2] God so loves the soul that gives itself entirely to him that he seems to love no other; and hence he calls it his only dove. St. Teresa after her death revealed to one of her sisters

[1] "Ego diligentes me diligo."—*Prov.* viii. 17.

[2] "Una est columba mea, perfecta mea."—*Cant.* vi. 8.

that God has greater love for one soul that aspires to perfection than for a thousand others that are in a state of grace, but are tepid and imperfect. O my God, for how many years hast Thou invited me to become entirely Thine, and I have refused! Death is already approaching, and shall I die as imperfect as I have hitherto lived? No, I hope that death will not find me as ungrateful as I have hitherto been. Help me; for I desire to leave all things to become entirely Thine.

3. Jesus Christ, through the love which he has for us, has given his whole self to us. *He hath loved us, and hath delivered Himself for us.*[1] "If then," says St. Chrysostom, "God has given himself entirely to you without reserve, if he has given you all, and nothing more remains for him to give you, as indeed he has done in his Passion and in the Holy Eucharist, reason requires that you also should give yourself without reserve to him." St. Francis de Sales says, "The heart is too little to love our bountiful Redeemer, who has loved us even to the laying down his life for us."[2] Oh, what ingratitude, what injustice, to divide our hearts, and not to give them wholly to God!

Let us then say with the spouse in the Canticles, *My beloved to Me, and I to My beloved.*[3] Thou, my God, hast given all to me, I will give all to Thee. I love Thee, my sovereign good. "My God and my all."[4] Thou desirest that I should be all Thine, and such do I desire to be. O Mary, my mother, pray for me, that I may not love anything but God.

[1] "Dilexit nos, et tradidit semetipsum pro nobis."—*Eph.* v. 2.

[2] Totum tibi dedit, nihil sibi reliquit.

[3] "Dilectus meus mihi, et ego illi."—*Cant.* ii. 16.

[4] Deus meus, et omnia.

MEDITATION LXXXVII.

The Trouble and Confusion of the Hour of Death.

1. *Be ye always ready: for at what hour you think not, the Son of man will come.*[1] "Be ye always ready." Our blessed Saviour does not tell us to begin to prepare ourselves when death has arrived, but to prepare ourselves beforehand; because the time of death will be a time of confusion, when it will be morally impossible to prepare ourselves in a proper manner to appear for judgment, and to obtain a favorable sentence. "It is a just punishment," says St. Augustin, "upon him who, having it in his power to do good, will not do it, not to be able to do it afterwards when he desires to do it."[2]

No, my God! I will not wait until that time to begin a change of life. Make known to me what I must now do to please Thee, for I desire to do without reserve whatever Thou requirest of me.

2. The time of death is the time of night, when nothing can be done. *The night cometh on, when no man can work.*[3] The fatal news of the disease being mortal, the grief and pains which accompany it, the disordered state of the head, and, above all, remorse of conscience, will cast the poor sick man into such a state of distress and confusion as to hinder him from knowing what he is doing. He will anxiously desire to escape damnation, but will not find the means, for the time of chastisement will be at hand. *I will repay them in due time, that their foot may slide.*[4]

O my God! I give Thee thanks for allowing me time

[1] "Et vos estote parati; quia, qua hora non putatis, Filius hominis veniet."—*Luke*, xii. 40.

[2] *De lib. arbit.* l. 3, c. 18.

[3] "Venit nox, quando nemo potest operari."—*John*, ix. 4.

[4] Et ego retribuam in tempore, ut labatur pes eorum."—*Deut.* xxxii. 35.

to amend, now that it is the time of mercy and not of punishment. I would rather lose all things than forfeit Thy grace. My sovereign good, I love Thee above all things.

3. Imagine yourself in a vessel overtaken by a storm in the midst of the sea, already struck upon a rock and on the point of sinking; think how great would be your confusion, and that you would not know what to do to escape death. And hence imagine how great will be the confusion of the sinner, who at his death finds himself in a bad state of conscience. His will, his relatives, the last sacraments, restitutions to be made, the calls of God which he despised, oh, what a tempest will all these things create in the soul of the poor dying sinner! Go then, go now and put your troubled conscience in order.

O my God! let not Thy blood be shed for me in vain. Thou hast promised pardon to him that repents, wherefore do I grieve from the bottom of my heart for the many offences I have committed against Thee. I love Thee, O Lord! above all things, and will nevermore offend Thee. How is it possible I should ever again, after so many mercies, offend Thee? No, my God! I will rather die. Holy Mary, pray for me to thy divine Son, that I may never more offend him.

MEDITATION LXXXVIII.

The Provoking of God by Sin to Depart from us.

1. Every soul that loves God is loved by him in return; and God dwells within it and leaves it not until he is expelled by sin: "He forsakes not, unless he be forsaken,"[1] says the Council of Trent. When the soul deliberately consents to mortal sin, it expels God, and as it were says to him, Leave me, O Lord! for I desire

[1] "Non deserit, nisi deseratur."—*Sess.* 6, c. 11.

to possess Thee no longer. *The wicked have said to God, Depart from us.*[1]

O my God! I have then had the audacity, when I committed sin, to expel Thee from my soul and to desire to have Thee no longer with me! But Thou wouldst not have me despair, but repent and love Thee. Yes, my Jesus, I do repent for having offended Thee, and love Thee above all things.

2. The sinner must be sensible that God cannot dwell in a soul together with sin. When therefore sin enters the soul God must depart from it. So that the sinner, by admitting sin, says to God, As Thou canst not remain any longer with me, unless I renounce sin, depart from me; it is better to lose Thee than the pleasure of committing sin. At the same time that the soul expels God it gives possession to the devil. Thus does the sinner eject his God who loves him, and makes himself the slave of a tyrant who hates him.

This, O Lord! is what I have hitherto done. Oh, give me some share of that abhorrence for my sins which Thou didst experience in the garden of Gethsemane. Dearest Redeemer, would that I had never offended Thee!

3. When an infant is baptized, the priest commands the devil to depart from its soul: "Go forth, unclean spirit, and give place to the Holy Ghost."[2] On the contrary, when man falls from a state of grace into mortal sin, he says to God, "Go forth from me, O Lord, and give place to the devil."[3]

Such is the foul ingratitude, O Lord! with which I have frequently repaid Thy great love towards me. Thou didst come down from heaven to seek me, the lost sheep; and I have fled from Thee and expelled Thee

[1] "Dixerunt Deo: Recede a nobis."—*Job*, xxi. 14.

[2] Exi, immunde spiritus, da locum Spiritui Sancto.

[3] Exi a me, Domine, da locum diabolo.

from my soul. But no, I will now embrace Thy sacred feet and will nevermore leave Thee, my beloved Lord. Help me with Thy holy grace. And, O blessed Mary, most holy Queen ! do not abandon me.

MEDITATION LXXXIX.

The Abuse of Grace.

1. The graces which God bestows on us, his lights, his calls, and the good thoughts with which he inspires us, have all been purchased for us by the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ. To the end that man might be able to receive them, it was necessary that the Son of God should die, and by his merits render him capable of such divine favors. He, therefore, who despises the divine graces, by abusing them, despises the blood and death of Jesus Christ. Such abuse has caused the eternal destruction of numberless Christians, who are now bewailing their sins in hell without hope or remedy.

O my God! how often have I deserved to become one of their number ! I thank Thee that Thou now allowest me time to bewail my past crimes, and hope that Thou wilt pardon me.

2. O God ! what an eternal torment must it be to the souls in hell, to call to mind the many graces they received from Thee in this world, now that they know the value of them and the evil which they have done by despising them ! My beloved Redeemer, give me light and grace to know my obligation to love Thee, for having, instead of chastising me for my ingratitude, and abandoning me to my sins, increased Thy lights and redoubled Thy calls upon me. Behold, since Thou now callest me, I will become entirely Thine, and forever.

3. Reflect, Christian, that if God had bestowed the same graces upon an infidel which he has upon you, that infidel would now most probably be a saint. And

what have you done? God has multiplied his graces, and you have multiplied your offences against him. If you continue in your sins, how will it be possible for God to bear longer with you and not to abandon you? Put an end, without delay, to your ingratitude, and tremble, lest, if you should not now avail yourself of the graces which he bestows upon you, no more lights nor graces should be conferred upon you.

Yes, my God, Thou hast already borne with me too long; I will nevermore despise Thee. And why should I delay? That Thou mayest really abandon me? *Cast me not away from Thy face.*[1] Reject me not, O Lord; from henceforth I will love Thee with my whole soul. Thou indeed art most worthy of all love; and I will endeavor to please and love Thee in all things. Strengthen me and make me faithful. Mary, Mother of God, help me with thy prayers.

MEDITATION XC.

Divine Love Victorious over God Himself.

1. Our God is omnipotent: who then will ever overcome and conquer him? But no, says St. Bernard, love towards man has conquered and triumphed over him:[2] for this his love has caused him to die in torments upon a disgraceful cross to secure man's salvation. O infinite love! unhappy the soul that loves Thee not.

2 What man, passing by Calvary on that day when Jesus was dying upon the cross, if, on inquiring who that criminal was, crucified in such a mangled state, he had been told that it was the Son of God, true God, equal with his Father, had he not been a believer, would not have said with the Gentiles that to believe such things was folly? "It appeared folly," says St. Gregory, "that the

[1] "Ne projicias me a facie tua."—*Ps.* l. 13.

[2] "Triumphat de Deo amor."—*In Cant.* s. 64.

author of life should die for men."[1] If it would have appeared folly to suppose that a king would become a worm for the love of a worm; greater still would have appeared the folly of believing that God had become man for the love of man, to die for man. This led St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi to say, concerning this immense love of God, "My Jesus, Thou lovest us to infatuation."

And, alas! I, a miserable sinner, have not loved God, but have many times offended him!

3. Christian, lift up your eyes, and behold that afflicted one upon the cross, oppressed with grief and torments, struggling in his agony, on the point of expiring, dying for the pure love of you. Know you who he is? He is your God. And if you believe that he is thy God, ask who has reduced him to such a miserable condition. "What has done this?"[2] says St. Bernard. "Love has done it, regardless of its own dignity."[3] It was love, which refuses no pain, nor disgrace, when it would make itself known and exert itself for its beloved.

O Jesus! it was because Thou didst so much love me, that Thou didst suffer so much for me: if Thou hadst loved me less Thou wouldst have suffered less. I love Thee, my dear Redeemer, with my whole heart. And how can I refuse God my whole love, when he has not refused me his precious blood, his life? I love Thee, O Jesus, my love, my all! Holy Mary, Virgin of virgins, help me by thy prayers faithfully to love Jesus.

MEDITATION XCI.

The Sentence of the Wicked at the Last Judgment.

1. Consider how great the rage of the wicked will be, to behold on the last day, the just, shining with glory,

[1] "Stultum visum est, ut pro hominibus Auctor vitæ moreretur."—*S. Greg. hom.* 6 *in Evang.*

[2] Quis hoc fecit?

[3] "Amor, dignitatis nescius."—*In Cant.* s. 64.

waiting with joyful eagerness for that *Come, ye blessed*,[1] with which Jesus Christ will invite them into heaven; and how great the shame and confusion of the wicked will be to behold themselves surrounded by devils, and trembling with expectation of that *Depart from me, ye cursed*,[2] with which Jesus Christ will pronounce their condemnation before the whole world. O my dear Redeemer! suffer not Thy death, which Thou didst undergo with so much love, to become of no avail to me.

2. *Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.*[3] Such will be the sentence of condemnation, such the unhappy doom, which will fall upon the wicked: to burn forever in the flames of hell, accursed of God and separated from him. Do Christians believe that there is a hell? How comes it, then, that so many voluntarily expose themselves to its terrible torments? O my God! who knows but that I also may be of their number at the last day? I hope through Thy precious blood that so dreadful an evil will not befall me; but who will make me certain of this? Enlighten me, O Lord! and make known to me what I must do to escape Thy wrath, which I have hitherto so often provoked; take Thou pity on me and forgive me.

3. At last, in the midst of the valley of Josaphat, the earth will open and swallow up the wicked, together with the devil and all his evil spirits; who will all hear those gates shut over them which will never again be opened for all eternity. O accursed sin, to what a miserable end wilt thou one day conduct innumerable souls! Unhappy they for whom is reserved such a lamentable doom for all eternity! O my God! what will my lot be? The fire of hell does not terrify me so much as the thought of being forever separated and at

[1] Venite, benedicti.

[2] Discedite, maledicti.

[3] "Discedite a me, maledicti, in ignem æternum."—*Matt.* xxv. 41.

a distance from Thee, my only good. My dear Redeemer, if hitherto I have despised Thee, I now love Thee above all things and with my whole heart. I know that the punishment of remaining forever separated from Thee will not befall those who love Thee; grant therefore that I may love Thee forever; bind me and unite me closely to Thee; unite me daily more and more to Thee, that I may never be separated from Thee, and then do with me whatever else Thou pleasest. Holy Mary, advocate of sinners, never cease to protect me.

MEDITATION XCII.

The Sentence of the Elect.

1. *Come, ye blessed of my Father.*[1] Such will be the glorious sentence which in the day of triumph will be pronounced in favor of those who have loved God. St. Francis of Assisi, having had it revealed to him that he was one of the predestinate, almost died of the consolation which such a revelation afforded him; what then will be the joy of the elect when they hear Jesus Christ inviting them, Come, ye blessed children, come and possess the inheritance of your divine Father; come and reign with him forever in heaven!

How often, O God! have I through my own fault forfeited Thy blessed kingdom! But, O Jesus! Thy precious merits encourage me to hope that I shall regain it. My dear Redeemer, I trust in Thee and love Thee.

2. Oh, how will the blessed congratulate one another when they behold themselves placed upon thrones and united in the enjoyment of God for all eternity, without the least fear of ever being again separated from him! What joy and glory will be theirs to enter on that day crowned into heaven, singing together songs of glad-

[1] "Venite, benedicti Patris mei."—*Matt.* xxv. 34.

ness and the sweet praises of God! Happy souls, that are destined to such a blessed lot!

O God of my soul! bind me to Thee with the sweet bonds of Thy holy love, that in that day I may enter into Thy kingdom and praise and love Thee forever. *The mercies of the Lord I will sing forever.*[1]

3. Let us arouse our slumbering faith. It is certain that we shall one day be judged, and that we shall receive sentence either of eternal life or of eternal death. If we be not secure of obtaining the sentence of life, let us endeavor to make it certain. Let us fly from all those occasions which might expose us to the loss of our souls; and unite ourselves to Jesus Christ by frequently approaching the sacraments, by pious meditations, by spiritual reading and continual prayer. The adoption or neglect of these means will be the sign of our salvation or of our perdition.

My beloved Jesus, and my Judge, I hope through Thy precious blood that Thou wilt on that day bless me; and hence do Thou bless me now, and pardon me all the offences I have committed against Thee. Grant me to hear the same consoling words that Thou didst address to Magdalen, *Thy sins are forgiven thee.*[2] I am sorry with my whole heart for having offended Thee; pardon me, and at the same time give me grace always to love Thee. I love Thee, my sovereign good; I love Thee more than myself, my treasure, my love, my all. *Thou art the God of my heart, and my portion forever.*[3] O my God! Thee only do I desire. Holy Mary, by thy powerful intercession thou canst procure my salvation, and thou desirest it; in thee do I confide.

[1] "Misericordias Domini in æternum cantabo, in æternum cantabo." —*Ps.* lxxxviii. 2.

[2] "Remittuntur tibi peccata."—*Luke,* vii. 48.

[3] "Deus cordis mei, et pars mea Deus in æternum."—*Ps.* lxxii. 26.

MEDITATION XCIII.

The Dishonoring of God by Sin.

1. *By transgression of the law thou dishonorest God.*[1] Take notice, sinner, what the Apostle says, and consider what you do when you break the divine law; you dishonor God. Yes, the sinner dishonors God when he loses all respect for him before his face, and declares by his actions that it is not a great evil to disobey God and to make no account of his law.

Behold, O God! prostrate at Thy feet an ungrateful sinner, who, after having been so loved and favored by Thee, has many times dishonored Thee by breaking Thy precepts. I have deserved a thousand hells, but remember that Thou didst die in order to save me from hell.

2. The sinner dishonors God by preferring a miserable gratification, a wretched worldly gain, or a mere caprice to the grace of God; for by giving his consent to sin he declares that such things are more precious to him than the friendship of God. Thus is God dishonored and affronted by the sinner, who by his actions pronounces him to be viler than some wretched gratification, for which he turns his back upon him.

O my God! Thou art an infinite good; and how could I, a miserable worm, prefer any corrupt inclinations and passions to Thee? If I did not know that Thou hast promised pardon to those who repent, I should not dare to crave Thy mercy. I am sorry, O infinite goodness! for having offended Thee.

3. God is our last end, for he has created us to serve and love him in this world, that we may be happy with him forever in the next. But when man prefers a vile pleasure to divine grace, he makes his pleasure his last

[1] "Per prævaricationem legis, Deum inhonoras."—*Rom.* ii. 23.

end, he makes it his God. What a dishonor must it be to God, who is infinitely good, to see himself exchanged for something so vile and wretched!

My beloved Redeemer, I have offended Thee; but Thou wouldst not have me despair Thy mercy; although Thou knowest my ingratitude, yet dost Thou love me and desire my salvation. I am sensible of the evil I have done by offending Thee, and I am sorry for it with my whole heart. I am resolved rather to die than again incur Thy displeasure. I fear my own weakness, but I hope, in Thy goodness, that Thou wilt enable me to be faithful to Thee till death. O Jesus! Thou art my hope and my love. Holy Mary, intercede for me, that I may obtain salvation.

MEDITATION XCIV.

The Joy of Jesus Christ at Finding the Lost Sheep.

1. Our blessed Saviour says of himself, in St. Luke (chap. xv.), that he is the affectionate shepherd, who, having lost one of his hundred sheep, leaves the ninety-nine in the desert, and goes in search of the one that is lost; and finding it, receives it with joy, takes it on his shoulders, and returning home calls together his neighbors to rejoice with him, saying, *Rejoice with me, because I have found my sheep that was lost.*[1]

O divine shepherd! I have been that lost sheep, but Thou hast sought me until, as I hope, Thou hast found me. Thou hast found me and I have found Thee. How shall I ever again stray away from Thee, my beloved Lord? And yet such a misfortune may happen to me. Oh, permit it not; never suffer me, O Jesus! to leave Thee and to lose Thee again.

2. But why, O Jesus! dost Thou call together Thy friends to rejoice with Thee for having found the lost

[1] Congratulamini mihi, quia inveni ovem meam, quæ perierat.

sheep? Shouldst Thou not rather bid them rejoice with the lost sheep for having again found Thee, its God? But so great is Thy love for my poor soul that Thou esteemest it Thy happiness to have found it! My dearest Redeemer, since Thou hast found me, bind me to Thee with the blessed bonds of Thy holy love, that I may always love Thee and may nevermore depart from Thee.

3. God, says the prophet, no sooner hears the voice of the penitent sinner crying to him for mercy, than he immediately answers and forgives him. *At the voice of thy cry, as soon as he shall hear, he will answer thee.*[1]

Behold me then at Thy sacred feet, O God! grieved from the bottom of my heart for having so often offended Thee, and craving Thy compassion and pardon. I can no longer endure to behold myself at a distance from Thee and deprived of Thy love. Thou art infinite goodness, and most worthy of infinite love. If hitherto I have despised Thy grace, I now value it above all the kingdoms of the earth. And because I have offended Thee, I beseech Thee to avenge thyself upon me, not indeed by casting me away from Thy face, but by giving me such a sorrow for my sins as may cause me to lament my guilt before Thee, all the days of my life. Lord, I love Thee with my whole heart, and as I cannot trust that I shall continue faithful to Thy love, be Thou my help and my succor. And do thou, O holy Virgin! help me with thy holy intercession.

MEDITATION XCV.

Jesus Suffering the Punishment Due to our Sins.

1. *Surely he hath borne our infirmities, and carried our sorrows.*[2] Who could believe this, if divine faith did not as-

[1] "Ad vocem clamoris tui, statim ut audierit, respondebit tibi."—*Isa.* xxx. 19.

[2] "Vere languores nostros ipse tulit, et dolores nostros ipse portavit."—*Isa.* liii. 4.

sure us of it: "Surely he hath borne our infirmities!" Man sins, and the Son of God makes satisfaction for him.

O Jesus! I have sinned, and hast Thou made satisfaction for me? Yes, I have deserved hell, and Thou, in order to deliver me from eternal death, hast been pleased to be condemned to death upon the cross! In a word, in order to pardon me Thou wouldst not pardon Thyself, and shall I ever be so base as to offend Thee again during the remainder of my life? No, my Saviour, I owe Thee too much, I am too much obliged to love Thee. Behold I am Thine, do with me what Thou pleasest; I will endeavor to please Thee in all things.

2. *He was wounded for our iniquities, he was bruised for our sins.*[1] Behold, my soul, behold your God scourged at a pillar in Pilate's hall, crowned with thorns, wounded from head to foot, and his whole body mangled and streaming with blood; hear how he lovingly says to you, My son, see what you have cost me.

Ah, my sweet Saviour! Thou hast suffered so much for me, and how could I have repaid all Thy love with so many offences! Thou, to save me from being lost, hast suffered so many torments, and I have lost Thee for a mere nothing! O accursed sinful pleasures! I hate and detest you; you have been the cause of all the sufferings of my Saviour for me.

3. St. Margaret of Cortona, when she meditated on the sufferings of Christ, could not restrain herself from excessively bewailing her sins. One day her confessor said to her, "Margaret, cease to weep; for God has pardoned thee." But hear what the penitent sinner answered: "Ah, Father, how can I think of no longer bewailing my sins, while I remember that they afflicted my dear Redeemer during the whole of his life?"

[1] "Ipse autem vulneratus est propter iniquitates nostras, attritus est propter scelera nostra."—*Isa.* liii. 5.

My beloved Jesus, I also must have afflicted Thee during Thy life by my sins. St. Margaret knew how to bewail her sins and to love Thee; but when shall I begin really to bewail mine, when shall I begin really to love Thee? I am sorry, my sovereign good, for having afflicted Thee. I love Thee, my dear Redeemer, more than myself. Oh, draw my whole heart to Thee, and inflame it entirely with Thy holy love; suffer me not to live any more ungrateful for the many graces which Thou hast bestowed upon me. Holy Mary, thou canst powerfully assist me by thy holy intercession to become holy; do this, I beseech thee, for the love of Jesus Christ.

MEDITATION XCVI.

The Happiness of Possessing the Grace of God, and the Misery of being Deprived of it.

1. Man knows not the value of divine grace,[1] and hence he exchanges it for a mere nothing. It is a treasure of infinite value.[2] The Gentiles said it was impossible for a creature to become the friend of God. But, no; divine grace induces God to call the soul that possesses it his friend:[3] *You are My friends*,[4] said our Blessed Saviour to his disciples.

When, therefore, O God! my soul was in the state of grace, it was Thy friend; but by sin it became the slave of the devil, and Thine enemy. I give Thee thanks for affording me time to recover Thy grace. I am sorry, O Lord! with my whole heart, for having lost it; in Thy pity, restore it to me, and suffer me not to lose it any more.

2. How fortunate should that man esteem himself

[1] "Nescit homo pretium ejus."—*Job*, xxviii. 13.

[2] "Infinitus enim thesaurus est hominibus."—*Wis.* vii. 14.

[3] "Surge, propera, amica mea."—*Cant.* ii. 10.

[4] "Vos amici mei estis."—*John*, xv. 14.

who becomes the friend of his king! It would be presumption for a vassal to expect that his prince should make him his friend; but it is not presumption for the soul to aspire to be the friend of God. "If I would become a friend of Cæsar," said a certain courtier, as St. Augustine relates, "I should have great difficulty in becoming such; but if I would become the friend of God, I am already his friend."[1] An act of contrition and of love makes us the friends of God. St. Peter of Alcantara said, "No tongue can express the greatness of the love of Jesus for a soul in the state of his grace."

O my God! am I in Thy grace or not? I certainly know that at one time I had lost it, and who knows whether I have regained it? O Lord! I love Thee, and am sorry for having offended Thee; make haste to pardon me.

3. Oh, how great, on the contrary, is the misery of a soul that is fallen from the state of grace! It is separated from the sovereign good. It belongs no more to God, and God belongs no more to it. It is no longer loved by God, but hated and abhorred by him. Before, he blessed it as his child; but now, he curses it as his enemy.

Such is the unhappy state in which I was, O God! when I had forfeited Thy grace. I hope I have arisen from my unhappy condition, but if I have not, hasten, O Jesus! to rescue me from it. Thou hast promised to love those who love Thee.[2] I love Thee, my sovereign good; do Thou love me; and may I never again be deprived of Thy love. Holy Mary, succor me, thy humble client; I commend myself to thy patronage.

[1] "Amicus autem Dei, si voluero, ecce nunc fio."—*Conf.* l. 8, c. 6.

[2] "Ego diligentes me diligo."—*Prov.* viii. 17.

MEDITATION XCVII.

Conformity to the Will of God.

1. The first effect of love is the union of will. The most high God, because he loves us, would have us love him, and hence he demands our hearts, that is, our wills: *My son, give me thy heart.*[1] Our whole life and salvation depend upon uniting our wills to the will of God, which is the only rule of what is just and perfect: "Life," says the Psalmist, "is in his will."[2] He who is united with the will of God lives and is saved; but he who separates himself from it dies and is lost.

No, my God, I will never more separate myself from whatever Thou desirest of me. Give me grace to love Thee, and dispose of me as Thou pleasest.

2. This is the great object of all those who love God, to conform themselves at all times to his divine will. And this is what Jesus taught us to pray for, that we may be able to fulfil the will of God here upon earth, with as much perfection as the blessed do in heaven. *Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.*[3] St. Teresa made an offering of her will to God, at least fifty times every day; in this imitating David, who said, *My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready.*[4] Ah! how effectually does one perfect act of conformity to the will of God change the sinner into a saint, as it happened to St. Paul, who by only saying to God, *Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?*[5] from a persecutor of the Church was changed into an apostle and vessel of election. O my God! I will nevermore lament the tribulations which Thou mayest send

[1] "Præbe, fili mi, cor tuum mihi."—*Prov.* xxiii. 26.

[2] "Et vita in voluntate ejus."—*Ps.* xxix. 6.

[3] Fiat voluntas tua, sicut in cœlo et in terra.

[4] "Paratum cor meum, Deus, paratum cor meum."—*Ps.* lvi. 8.

[5] "Domine, quid me vis facere?"—*Acts*, ix. 6.

me. I know that all will be for my good. I will say always, *Lord, may thy holy will be ever accomplished. As Thou willest, so do I will. Thy will be done. As it hath pleased the Lord, so be it done.*[1]

3. The most certain sign that the soul loves God is its peaceful conformity to the will of God in all adverse occurrences, such as poverty, sickness, losses, and ruin. In the afflictions which happen to us from the malice of men, we should consider not the stone which strikes us, but the hand of God who casts it. God does not will the sin of those who deprive us of our goods, reputation, or life; but that we should accept such afflictions as coming from his hands, and should say as Job did when his goods were taken from him, *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: as it hath pleased the Lord, so it is done; blessed be the name of the Lord.*[2]

O my God! I have not acted in this manner; how often, to follow my own will have I despised Thine! But then I did not love Thee; now I do love Thee more than myself; I embrace all Thy divine appointments, and desire to do whatever Thou pleasest. But Thou knowest my weakness, enable me therefore by Thy assistance to accomplish what I now resolve. O holy will of God! thou shalt be from henceforward my whole love. Holy Mary, obtain for me the grace ever to do the will of God during the remainder of my life.

[1] "Fiat voluntas tua. Ita, Pater; quoniam sic fuit placitum ante te."—*Matt.* xi. 26.

[2] "Dominus dedit, Dominus abstulit; sicut Domino placuit, ita factum est; sit nomen Domini benedictum."—*Job*, i. 21.

PART II.

Pious Reflections on Different Points of Spirituality, to Guide Souls that Desire to Advance in the Love of God.*

I.

The Thought of Eternity.

SAINT AUGUSTINE called the thought of eternity the great thought: *Magna cogitatio.* This thought has brought the saints to count all the treasures and greatness of this life as nothing more than straw, dust, smoke, and refuse. This thought has sent many anchorites to hide themselves in deserts and caves, and so many noble youths, and even kings and emperors, to shut themselves up in cloisters. This thought has given courage to so many martyrs to endure the torture of piercing nails and heated irons, and even of being burnt in the fire.

No; we are not created for this earth: the end for which God has placed us in the world is this, that with our good deeds we may inherit eternal life. *The end is*

* This little work was published in 1773, with the "Considerations on the Passion." The saintly author wrote on the 8th of September, 1773, in one of his spiritual letters: "Here are two little works, one of which may aid you to meditate on the Passion; I use it myself every day. . . . I also read every day something of the other little work, entitled 'Pious Reflections, etc.' I wish you to do the same; for I wrote it specially for those souls that desire to give themselves up entirely to God."—ED.

eternal life.[1] And, therefore, St. Eucherius said that the only affair that we should attend to in this life is eternity; that is, that we should win a happy eternity, and escape a miserable one. *The object for which we struggle is eternity.*[2] If assured of this end, we are forever blessed; if we fail of it, we are forever miserable.

Happy he who lives ever with eternity in view, with a lively faith that he must speedily die, and enter upon eternity. *The just man lives by faith.*[3] It is faith that makes the just to live in the sight of God, and which gives light to their souls, by withdrawing them from earthly affections, and placing before their thoughts the eternal blessings which God promises to them that love him.

St. Teresa said that all sins had their origin in a want of faith. Therefore, in order to overcome our passions and temptations, we ought constantly to revive our faith by saying: *I believe the life everlasting.*[4] I believe that after this life, which will soon be ended, there is an eternal life, either full of joys, or full of pains, which will befall me, according to my merits or demerits.

St. Augustine also said that a man who believes in eternity, and yet is not converted to God, has either lost his senses or his faith. "O eternity!" (these are his words), "he that meditates upon thee, and repents not, either has not faith, or he has no heart."[5] In reference to this, St. John Chrysostom relates that the Gentiles, when they saw Christians sinning, thought them either liars or fools. If you believe not (they said) what you say you believe, you are liars; if you believe in eter-

[1] "Finem vero, vitam æternam."—*Rom.* vi. 22.

[2] Negotium pro quo contendimus, æternitas est.

[3] "Justus ex fide vivit."—*Gal.* iii. 11.

[4] Credo vitam æternam.

[5] O æternitas! qui te cogitat, nec pœnitet, aut fidem non habet, aut, si habet fidem, cor non habet.

nity and sin, you are fools.[1] "Woe to sinners who enter upon eternity without having known it, because they would not think upon it!" exclaims St. Cæsarius; and then he adds, "But oh, double woe! They enter upon it, and they never come forth."[2]

St. Teresa said constantly to her disciples, "My children, there is one soul, one eternity." By which she meant to say, My children, we have one soul, and when that is lost, all is lost; and, once lost, it is lost forever. In a word, upon that last breath which we breathe in dying, it depends whether we are forever blessed, or in despair. If the eternity of the next life, if paradise, if hell, were mere fictions of literary men, and things of doubtful reality, even then we ought to bestow all our care to live well, and not to risk our soul forever. But no; these things are not doubtful; they are sure things, they are things of faith; they more surely exist than those things which we see with our bodily sight.

Let us, then, pray to our Lord, *Increase our faith;*[3] for, if we are not strong in faith, we may become worse than Luther or Calvin. On the other hand, one thought of living faith upon the eternity that awaits us may make us saints.

St. Gregory wrote that they who meditate on eternity are neither puffed up by prosperity, nor cast down by adversity; for they desire nothing and they fear nothing in this world.[4] When it happens to us to suffer any infirmities or persecutions, let us think of the hell which

[1] Exprobrabant gentiles, aut mendaces aut stultos esse Christianos: mendaces, si non crederent quod credere dicebant; stultos, si credebant et peccabant.

[2] Væ peccatoribus qui incognitam ingrediuntur æternitatem! Sed, væ duplex! ingrediuntur, et non egrediuntur!

[3] "Adauge nobis fidem."—*Luke*, xvii. 5.

[4] "Quisquis in solo æternitatis desiderio figitur, nec prosperitate attollitur, nec adversitate quassatur; dum nil habet in mundo quod appetat, nihil est quod de mundo pertimescat."—*Mor.* l. 10, c. 22.

we have deserved through our sins. When we do this, every cross will seem light, and we shall thank the Lord, and say, *It is the mercy of the Lord that we are not consumed.*[1] We shall say, with David, *Unless the Lord had been my helper, my soul had almost dwelt in hell.*[2] Through myself I was already lost; Thou hast done this, O God of mercy! that Thou hast stretched forth Thy hand, and drawn me forth from hell: *Thou hast delivered my soul, that it should not perish.*[3]

O my God! Thou knowest how often I have deserved hell; but, notwithstanding, Thou biddest me hope, and I desire to hope. My sins terrify me; but Thy death giveth me courage, and Thy promise of pardon to him that repenteth. A contrite and humbled heart, O God! Thou wilt not despise. I have dishonored Thee for the time that is past, but now I love Thee above all things; and I grieve more than for any other evil, that I have offended Thee. O my Jesus! have mercy upon me. Mary, Mother of God, pray for me.

II.

We are Pilgrims on Earth.

While we live in this life, we are so many pilgrims who wander up and down upon the earth, far from our country, which is heaven, where the Lord awaits us, that we may rejoice forever in his glorious countenance. *While we are in the body*, writes the apostle, *we are absent from the Lord.*[4] If, then, we love God, we ought to have a continual desire to leave this place of exile, by being

[1] "Misericordiæ Domini, quia non sumus consumpti."—*Lam.* iii. 22.

[2] "Nisi quia Dominus adjuvit me, paulo minus habitasset in inferno anima mea."—*Ps.* xciii. 17.

[3] "Tu autem eruisti animam meam, ut non periret."—*Isa.* xxxviii. 17.

[4] "Dum sumus in corpore, peregrinamur a Domino."—2 *Cor.* v. 6.

separated from the body, that we may go and see him. It was for this that St. Paul ever sighed, as he said, *We are confident, and have a good will to be absent rather from the body, and to be present with the Lord.*[1]

Before the common redemption of us miserable sons of Adam, the way of approach to God was closed up; but Jesus Christ, by his death, has obtained for us the grace of having it in our power to become the sons of God;[2] and thus has opened to us the gates by which we can have access, as children, to our Father, Almighty God.[3]

On this account St. Paul says, *Now therefore you are no more strangers and foreigners; but you are fellow-citizens with the saints and the domestics of God.*[4] Thus, so long as we are in the grace of God, we enjoy the citizenship of paradise, and belong to the family of God. St. Augustine says, "Nature corrupted with sin produces citizens of an earthly city; but grace, which frees our nature from sin, makes us citizens of a heavenly country, and vessels of mercy."[5]

This made David say, *I am a stranger on earth; hide not Thy commandments from me.*[6] O Lord! I am a pilgrim upon this earth, teach me to keep Thy precepts, which are the road by which I may reach my country in heaven. It is not wonderful that the wicked should wish to live

[1] "Audemus autem, et bonam voluntatem habemus magis peregrinari a corpore et præsentes esse ad Dominum."—2 *Cor.* v. 8.

[2] "Dedit eis potestatem filios Dei fieri."—*John*, i. 12.

[3] "Quoniam per ipsum habemus accessum ambo in uno spiritu ad Patrem."—*Eph.* ii. 18.

[4] "Ergo jam non estis hospites et advenæ, sed estis cives Sanctorum et domestici Dei."—*Eph.* ii. 19.

[5] "Cives terrenæ civitatis parit peccato vitiata natura, qui sunt vasa iræ; cives vero cœlestis patriæ parit a peccato naturam liberans gratia, qui sunt vasa misericordiæ."—*De Civ. D.* l. 15.

[6] "Incola ego sum in terra, non abscondas a me mandata tua."—*Ps.* cxviii. 19.

forever in this world, for they justly fear that they shall pass from the pains of this life to the eternal and infinitely more terrible pains of hell; but how can he who loves God, and has a moral certainty that he is in a state of grace, desire to go on living in this vale of tears, in continual bitterness, in straits of conscience, in peril of perishing? How can he help sighing to depart at once to unite himself to God in a blessed eternity, where there is no danger of his destroying himself? Oh, how souls that love God groan continually while they live, and cry out with David, *Woe is me, for my banishment is prolonged!*[1] Unhappy is he who must continue to live a long time in this world, in the midst of so many perils to his salvation! Therefore it is that the saints have continually had this prayer upon their lips, *Thy kingdom come.*[2] Quickly, O Lord! quickly carry us to Thy kingdom. Let us make speed, then, as the apostle exhorts us, to enter that kingdom, where we shall find perfect peace and contentment: *Let us hasten to enter into that rest.*[3] Let us hasten, I say, with desire, and not cease to walk onwards till we come to that blessed harbor which God prepares for them that love him.

"He that runs," says St. John Chrysostom, "pays not heed to the spectators, but to the crown of victory; he stands not, but hastens on his course."[4] Therefore the saint argues that the longer has been our life, the more we should hasten with good works to win the palm. Thus, our one constant prayer for the relief of the troubles and trials which we endure in this life ought to be this: *Thy kingdom come.*[5] Lord, may Thy kingdom

[1] "Heu mihi, quia incolatus meus prolongatus est."—*Ps.* cxix. 5.

[2] Adveniat, adveniat regnum tuum.

[3] "Festinemus ergo ingredi in illam requiem."—*Heb.* iv. 11.

[4] "Qui currit, non ad spectatores, sed ad palmam attendit; non consistit, sed cursum intendit."—*In Ep. ad Heb. hom.* 7.

[5] Adveniat regnum tuum.

speedily come, where, united eternally with Thee, and seeing Thee face to face with all our powers, we shall no longer know fear, or danger of falling away. And when we find ourselves afflicted with the labors or dishonors of the world, let us comfort ourselves with the great reward that God prepares for those who suffer for the love of him: *Rejoice in that day, and be glad; for behold, your reward is great in heaven.*[1] St. Cyprian said that with good reason our Lord wills that we should rejoice in labors and persecutions, because then the true soldiers of God are proved, and crowns are distributed to the faithful.[2]

Behold, O my God! my heart is ready;[3] behold me prepared for every cross that Thou givest me to endure. No, I desire not delights or pleasures in this life; he who has offended Thee and deserves hell, deserves not pleasures. I am ready to suffer all the infirmities and adversities that Thou sendest me; I am ready to embrace all the slights of men; I am content, if it pleases Thee to deprive me of all bodily and spiritual consolations; it is enough that Thou dost not deprive me of Thyself, and of the eternal love of Thee. This I deserve not, but I hope for it, through the blood that Thou hast shed for me. I love Thee, O my God, my love, my all! I shall live forever, and I shall love Thee forever, as I hope; and my paradise will ever be to rejoice in Thy infinite joy, which Thou dost truly merit, through Thine infinite goodness.

[1] "Gaudete in illa die, et exsultate; ecce enim merces vestra multa est in cœlo."—*Luke*, vi. 23.

[2] "Gaudere nos et exsultare voluit in persecutionibus Dominus quia tunc dantur coronæ fidei, tunc probantur milites Dei."—*Epist. ad Thibar.*

[3] "Paratum cor meum."—*Ps.* lvi. 8.

III.

God Deserves to be Loved above Everything.

St. Teresa said that it was a great favor that God should call a soul to love him. Let us, then, love him, since we are called to this love, and let us love him as he desires to be loved. *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.*[1] The Venerable Louis da Ponte felt ashamed at saying to God, "O Lord, I love Thee above everything; I love Thee more than all creatures, than all riches, than all honors, than all earthly pleasures;" for it seemed to him that it was equivalent to saying, "My God, I love Thee more than straw, and smoke, and dust."

But God is satisfied that we should love him above all things. Therefore, at least, let us say, "Yea, O Lord! I love Thee more than all the honors of the world, more than all its riches, more than all my kindred and friends; I love Thee more than health, more than my good name, more than science, more than all my comforts; I love Thee more Than everything I possess, more than myself."

And let us still further say: "O Lord! I value Thy graces and Thy gifts; but more Than all Thy gifts, I love Thyself, who alone art infinite goodness, and a good worthy of infinite love, which exceeds every other good thing. And, therefore, O my God! whatever Thou mayest give me short of Thyself, which is not Thyself, is not sufficient for me; if Thou givest me Thyself, Thou alone art sufficient for me. Let others seek what they will, I will seek nothing but Thee alone, my love, my all. In Thee alone I receive all that I can find or desire."

The sacred Spouse said, that among all things, she

[1] "Diliges Dominum Deum tuum ex toto corde tuo."—*Matt.* xxii. 37.

had chosen to love her beloved: *My beloved is fair and ruddy, and chosen out of thousands.*[1] And whom shall we choose to love? Among all our friends of this world, where can we find a friend more worthy of love and more faithful than God, and who has loved us more than God? Let us pray, then, and let us pray constantly, "O Lord! draw me after Thee; for if Thou dost not draw me after Thee, I cannot come to Thee."[2]

O Jesus! my Saviour, when will it be that, stripped of any other affection, I may ask and seek for none but Thee! I fain would detach myself from everything; but constantly some importunate affections enter my heart, and draw me away from Thee. Separate me, then, with Thy powerful hand, and make Thyself the one object of all my affections and all my thoughts.

St. Augustine said that he who has God has everything, and he who has not God has nothing.[3] What does it profit a rich man that he possesses many treasures of gold and jewels, if he lives apart from God? What does it profit a monarch to extend his dominions, if he has not the grace of God? What does it profit a man of letters to understand many sciences and languages, if he knows not how to love his God? What does it profit a general to command an army, if he lives the slave of the devil, and far from God? While David was yet king, but in a state of sin, he walked in his gardens, he went to his sports and all other pleasures; but these creatures seemed to say, *Where is thy God?*[4] Wouldst thou seek in us thy happiness? Go seek God, whom thou hast left, for he alone can give thee rest. And thus David confessed that, in the midst of all his

[1] "Dilectus meus candidus et rubicundus, electus ex millibus."—*Cant.* v. 10.

[2] "Trahe me."—*Cant.* i. 3.

[3] *Serm.* 85, *E. B.*

[4] Ubi est Deus tuus?

delights, he found not peace, and mourned night and day, considering that he was without God. *Tears were my bread night and day, while they daily said to me, Where is thy God?*[1]

In the midst of the miseries and toils of this world, who can console us better than Jesus Christ? He alone says, *Come to me, all ye that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you.*[2] O folly of the worldly! One single tear shed for our sins, one cry, "My God!" uttered in love, by a soul in a state of grace, is worth more than a thousand festivals, a thousand plays, a thousand banquets, in giving contentment to a heart in love with the world. I say again, O folly! and a folly, too, which none can remedy when there comes that death, when it is night, as the Gospel says, *The night cometh, in which no man can work.*[3] Wherefore our Lord warns us "to walk while the light favors us; for the night will come, when no man can walk."[4] Let God alone, then, be all our treasure, all our love; and let all our desire be to please God, who will not suffer us to conquer him in love. He rewards a hundred-fold everything that we do to give him pleasure.

O my God, and all my good! be Thou the ruling power in my soul; and, as I would choose to love Thee above all things, so do Thou grant that in all things I may prefer Thy will to my own pleasure. O my Jesus! I trust in Thy blood, that, through all my life that remains, I may love none but Thee upon this earth, in order that I may come one day to possess Thee forever

[1] "Fuerunt mihi lacrymæ meæ panes die ac nocte, dum dicitur mihi quotidie: Ubi est Deus tuus?"—*Ps.* xli. 4.

[2] "Venite ad me omnes, qui laboratis et onerati estis, et ego reficiam vos."—*Matt.* xi. 28.

[3] "Venit nox, quando nemo potest operari."—*John*, ix. 4.

[4] "Ambulate dum lucem habetis, ut non vos tenebræ comprehendant."—*John*, xii. 35.

in the kingdom of the blessed. O holy Virgin! aid me with thy powerful prayers, and carry me to kiss thy feet in paradise.

IV.

In order that a Soul may become Holy, it must give itself to God without Reserve.

St. Philip Neri said that so much of our love as we fix upon creatures we take away from God; and, therefore, our Saviour, as St. Jerome wrote, is jealous of our hearts.[1] As he himself has loved us so abundantly, he desires to reign alone in our hearts, and to have no companions there, who may rob him of a portion of that love which he desires to have wholly to himself; and, therefore, it displeases him to see us attached to any affection which is not for him. And does our Saviour ask too much; after having given his own blood and life, dying for us upon a cross? Does he not deserve to be loved by us with all our hearts, and without reserve?

St. John of the Cross said, that every attachment to creatures hinders us from belonging wholly to God. *Who will give me the wings of a dove, that I may flee away and be at rest?*[2] says the Psalmist. There are souls that are called by God to become saints, but that, coming to him with reserve, and not giving him their whole love, retain some affection for earthly things, and thus never become, and never will become, holy. They fain would fly, but being held down by some attachment, they cannot, but remain fixed upon earth. We must, therefore, strip ourselves of everything. Every thread, says the same St. John, whether great or small, hinders the soul from flying to God.

[1] "Zelotypus est Jesus."—*Ad Eustoch. De cust. virginit.*

[2] "Quis dabit mihi pennas sicut columbæ, et volabo, et requiescam?" —*Ps.* liv. 7.

St. Gertrude once prayed to the Lord that he would teach her what he would have her to do. The Lord answered, I desire nothing from thee but a devoted heart.[1] And it was this which David sought from God, *Create in me a clean heart, O God!*[2] O my God! give me a pure heart; that is, emptied and stripped of every earthly affection.

"All for all,"[3] wrote Thomas à Kempis. To gain all, we must give all. To possess God, we must leave all that is not God. Then the soul can say to to the Lord, "My Jesus, I have left all for Thee; now give Thyself wholly to me." To attain this, we must not cease to beg of God that he would fill us with his holy love. Love is that mighty fire that burns up in our hearts every affection that is not for God. St. Francis de Sales said that when a house is in flames, we throw all the furniture out of the windows;[4] by which he meant that when a soul is inflamed, and the divine love takes possession of it, it has no need of sermons or spiritual directors to detach it from the world; the love of God itself will cleanse the heart, and despoil it of every impure desire.

Holy love is introduced in the Canticles under the symbol of a cellar of wine: *The king brought me into the wine-cellar; he created love within me.*[5] In this blessed cell the souls that are the brides of Christ, inebriated with the wine of holy love, lose all sense for the things of the world, admire God alone, in all things seek God alone, speak only of God, and desire to think only of God; and when they hear others speak of riches, dignities, pleasures, they turn to God and say to him, with a burning

[1] *Insin.* l. 4, c. 26.

[2] "Cor mundum crea in me, Deus."—*Ps.* l. 12.

[3] "Totum pro toto."—*Imit. Chr.* b. 3, c. 37.

[4] *Spirit.* p. 3. ch. 27.

[5] "Introduxit me in cellam vinariam, ordinavit in me charitatem."—*Cant.* ii. 4.

sigh, *My God, and my all!*[1] What a world, what pleasures, what honors! Be Thou all my joy, all my contentment. St. Teresa wrote, when speaking of the prayer of union with God, that this union consists in dying to all worldly things, in order to possess nothing but God.[2]

That a soul may give itself wholly to God, three means are especially necessary: 1. The avoidance of all defects, even the very least, accompanied with conquests over every inordinate desire, such as an abstinence from observing such and such an object of sight or hearing, from certain little pleasures of sense, from certain witty or unnecessary conversations, and such-like; 2. Among things which are good, the constant choice of those that are the best and the most pleasing to God; and 3. The receiving with peace of mind and thanksgiving, from the divine hands, all things that are displeasing to our self-love.

O my Jesus, my love, my all! how can I see Thee dying upon a shameful cross, despised by all, and consumed by anguish, and then go and seek earthly pleasures and glories? I would be wholly Thine. Forget the offences I have committed against Thee, and receive me. Teach me to know from what things I ought to separate myself, and what I must do to please Thee—all this I desire to do. Give me strength to follow Thy will, and to be faithful to Thee. O my beloved Redeemer! Thou willest that I should give myself to Thee without reserve, that I may unite myself wholly to Thy heart. Behold, this day I give myself wholly to Thee, without reserve, everything that I am; from Thee I hope for grace to be faithful even to death. O Mother of God, and my own Mother Mary! obtain for me the grace of holy perseverance.

[1] Deus meus, et omnia.

[2] *Interior Castle, dem.* 5, ch. 1.

V.

The Two Great Means for Becoming Holy—Desire and Resolution.

1. All holiness consists in loving God. The love of God is that infinite treasure in which we gain the friendship of God.[1] God is ready to give this treasure of his holy love, but he wills that we earnestly desire it. He that faintly desires any good thing takes little trouble to gain it. On the other hand, St. Laurence Justinian said that an earnest desire lightens all toil, and gives us strength.[2] And thus, he who little desires to advance in divine love, instead of becoming more ardent in the way of perfection, ever becomes more and more lukewarm; and thus is ever in imminent peril of falling headlong down some precipice. And, on the other hand, whoever aspires with fervent desire after perfection, and strengthens himself daily to advance in its path, little by little, with time will attain it. St. Teresa said, "God never gives many favors, except to those who earnestly desire his love." And again, "God leaves no good desire without its reward."[3] And therefore the saint advises every one not to suffer his desires to slacken, because, trusting in God, and strengthening ourselves little by little, we shall reach that point which all the saints have reached.

It is a deceit of the devil, according to the opinion of the same saint, which makes us think that it is a mark of pride to desire to become saints. It would be pride and presumption, if we trusted in our own works or intentions; but if we hope for all from God, he will give us that strength which we have not. Let us, then, desire,

[1] "Infinitus enim thesaurus est hominibus, quo, qui usi sunt, participes facti sunt amicitiæ Dei."—*Wis.* vii. 14.

[2] *De Disc. mon.* a. 6.

[3] *Way of Perf.* ch. 35.

with a very great desire, to attain to a lofty height of divine love; and let us say, with courage, *I can do all things through Him that strengtheneth me.*[1] And if we do not find that we possess this great desire, at least let us ask it urgently of Jesus Christ, that he may give it to us.

2. We will now pass on to the second means—resolution. Good desires must be accompanied by a determined spirit to strengthen ourselves in the attainment of the desired blessing. Many desire perfection, but take no right means to gain it; they want to live in a desert, to accomplish great works of penance and prayer, to endure martyrdom; but such desires are nothing better than mere fancies, which, instead of benefiting them, do them great harm. *These are the desires which slay the slothful man.*[2] Such a person, feeding himself upon these fruitless desires, pays no heed to the cure of his defects, the mortification of his appetites, and patience in suffering contempt and crosses. He would do great things, but such as are incompatible with his present condition, and therefore his imperfections increase; in every time of adversity he is agitated, every infirmity makes him impatient; and thus he lives imperfect, and imperfect he dies.

If, then, we truly desire to become saints, let us resolve—

1. To avoid every venial sin, however slight.

2. To detach ourselves from every earthly desire.

3. Let us not cease our accustomed exercises of prayer and mortification, however great may be the weariness and dryness we feel in them.

4. Let us meditate daily on the Passion of Jesus Christ, which inflames with divine love every heart that meditates upon it.

5. Let us resign ourselves in peace to the will of God in all things that trouble us, as Father Balthazar Alvarez

[1] "Omnia possum in eo qui me confortat."—*Phil.* iv. 13.

[2] "Desideria occidunt pigrum."—*Prov.* xxi. 25.

said, "He that in troubles resigns himself to the divine will, runs to God as swift as by a post."

6. Let us continually beg of God the gift of his holy love.

Resolution, resolution, said St. Teresa: "The devil has no dread of irresolute souls."[1] On the contrary, he who resolves to give himself truly to God will overcome even what seemed impossible. A resolved will conquers everything. Let us study to redeem the time that is lost; the time that remains, let us give it all to God. All time that is not devoted to God is lost. Do we not fear lest God should abandon us to our lukewarmness, which may lead us to utter ruin? Let us take courage, and live from this day forth upon the holy maxim, "We must please God even to death." Souls thus resolute are assisted by the Lord to fly in the way of perfection.

He that would belong wholly to God must resolve—

1. Not to commit even the slightest venial sin.

2. To give himself to God without reserve, and therefore to neglect nothing which may be pleasing to God, always with the approbation of his director.

3. Out of all good things, to choose that which is most pleasing to God.

4. Not to wait for the morrow, but whatever can be done to-day, to do it.

5. To pray daily to God, that he may increase in his love. With love everything can be done; without love, nothing. To gain everything, we must give everything. Jesus has given himself wholly to us, that we may be wholly his.

O miserable being that I am! O Thou God of my soul! for so many years I have lived upon earth, and what progress have I made in Thy love? My progress

[1] *Way of Perf.* ch. 24.

has been in my faults, in self-love, in sins. And shall I live this life even unto death? No; Jesus, my Saviour, help me· I would no longer be so ungrateful as I have been till now. I would truly love Thee, and would leave all to please Thee. Give me Thy hand, O Jesus! Thou who hast poured forth all Thy blood, that Thou mightest see me Thine. Such I would be, with Thy grace. Even till death, aid me, and strip me of everything which may hinder me from belonging wholly to Thee, who hast so much loved me. Grant it me through Thy merits; from Thee I hope it. And I hope it also from thee, O my Mother Mary. With thy prayers, which can obtain everything from God, obtain for me the grace of belonging wholly to him.

VI.

The Science of the Saints.

There are two kinds of sciences upon earth,—one heavenly, the other worldly. The heavenly is that which leads us to please God, and makes us great in heaven. The worldly is that which moves us to please ourselves, and to become great in the world. But this worldly science is folly and madness in the sight of God. *The wisdom of the world is foolishness with God.*[1] It is folly, for it makes fools of those who cultivate it; it makes them fools, and like the brutes, for it teaches them to gratify their carnal appetites like the beasts. St. John Chrysostom wrote, "We call him a man who preserves complete the image of a man; and what is the image of a man?—to be rational."[2] Hence it is that if a brute were ever to act according to reason, we should

[1] "Sapientia enim hujus mundi stultitia est apud Deum."—1 *Cor.* iii. 19.

[2] "Hominem illum dicimus, qui imaginem hominis salvam retinet; quæ autem est imago hominis? rationalem esse."—*Hom.* 23 *in Gen.*

say that such a brute acted like a man; so we say that a man who acts upon sensual appetites and contrary to reason acts like a brute.

But to return to the human and natural knowledge of earthly things, what do men know of all things which they have studied? What are we but so many blind moles, who, besides the truths which we know by faith, know only by means of our senses, or by conjecture; so that everything is uncertain and fallible. What writers on such subjects, however applauded by many, have escaped the criticism of others? But the evil is that the knowledge of the world puffs us up,[1] and makes us proud and prone to despise others—a pernicious fault, for, as St. James says, *God resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble.*[2]

Oh that they would be wise and understand, and know the latter end![3] Oh, if men would act by reason and the divine law, and thus would learn to provide, not so much for a temporal existence, which speedily ends, as for eternity, they would assuredly not occupy themselves in the attainment of any knowledge, except such as aids them in the obtaining eternal happiness and avoiding eternal pains.

St. John Chrysostom advises us to walk among the tombs of the dead, in order to learn the knowledge of salvation. Oh, what a school of truth are the sepulchres for learning the vanity of the world! "Let us go to the tombs; there," said the saint, "there I see nothing but corruption, bones, and worms."[4] From all these skele-

[1] "Scientia inflat."—1 *Cor.* viii. 1.

[2] "Deus superbis resistit, humilibus autem dat gratiam."—*James*, iv. 6.

[3] "Utinam saperent, et intelligerent, ac novissima providerent."—*Deut.* xxxii. 29.

[4] "Proficiscamur ad sepulcra. Nihil video nisi putredinem, ossa, et vermes."—*Hom.* 77 *in Matt.*

tons which I see, I cannot tell which belonged to the ignorant and which to the learned; I only see that with death all the glories of the world were finished for them. What remained to a Cicero, a Demosthenes, an Ulpian? *They have slept their sleep, and have found nothing in their hands.*[1]

Blessed is he who has received from God the science of the saints.[2] The science of the saints is to know the love of God. How many in the world are well versed in literature, in mathematics, in foreign and ancient languages! But what will all this profit them, if they know not the love of God? Blessed is he, said St. Augustine, who knows God, even if he knows nothing else.[3] He that knows God and loves him, though he be ignorant of what others know, is more learned than the learned who know not how to love God.

"Let the unlearned arise, and seize upon heaven!"[4] cried the same Augustine. How learned were St. Francis of Assisi, St. Pascal, St. John of God! ignorant in worldly knowledge, but well skilled in that which is divine. *Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to babes.*[5] By the *wise*, we are here to understand the worldly-wise, who labor for the possessions and glories of the world, and think little of eternal joys. And by *babes* we are to understand simple souls (like those of children), who know little of worldly wisdom, but devote all their care to pleasing God.

Let us not, then, envy those who know many things;

[1] "Dormierunt somnum suum, et nihil invenerunt . . . in manibus suis."—*Ps.* lxxv. 6.

[2] "Et dedit illi scientiam sanctorum."—*Wis.* x. 10.

[3] *Conf.* b. 5, c. 4.

[4] "Surgunt indocti, et cœlum rapiunt."—*Conf.* b. 8, c. 8.

[5] "Abscondisti hæc a sapientibus et prudentibus, et revelasti ea parvulis."—*Matt.* xi. 25.

let us only envy those who know how to love Jesus Christ; and let us imitate St. Paul, who said that he desired to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified. Happy are we if we attain to the knowledge of the love which Jesus crucified had for us, and from this book of love attain to the love of him. O Thou who art my true and perfect lover, where shall I find one who has so loved me as Thou hast! During my life that is past, I have lost my time in attaining the knowledge of many things which have profited my soul nothing, and I have thought nothing of knowing how to love Thee. I see that my life has been lost. I perceive that Thou callest me to Thy holy love; behold, I leave all; from this day forth, my one thought shall be to please Thee, my highest good. I give myself wholly to Thee; accept me; give me help to be faithful to Thee; I desire to be no longer my own, but all, all Thine. O mother of God! do thou also help me with thy prayers.

Permit me here to express the great consolation which I derived a few days since from information connected with the subject of the preceding considerations—the science of the saints. I have been assured that, after having received so much applause from all Europe for his poetic compositions, which are as noxious as they are beautiful (I mean those only which treat of profane love), for the more tender his expressions, the more they are calculated to kindle in the breasts of young persons the pernicious flames of impure affections, the celebrated Signore Peter Metastasio has published a little book in prose, in which he expresses his detestation of his writings on profane love, and declares that, were it in his power, he would retract them and make them disappear from the world, even at the cost of his blood. And I am informed that his poetic compositions are now confined to some pieces on moral or spiritual subjects, which he writes in order to comply with his obligation as poet to the imperial court. He lives retired in his own house, leading a life of prayer. This information has given me unspeakable consolation; because his public declaration and his most laudable example will help to undeceive many young persons who seek to acquire a great name by similar compositions on profane love. It is certain that, by his retraction, Signore Metastasio has deserved more encomiums

than he would by the publication of a thousand poetic works; for these he might be praised by men, but now he is praised by God. Hence, as I formerly detested his vanity in prizing himself for such compositions (I do not speak of his sacred pieces, which are excellent and deserving of all praise), so now I shall never cease to praise him; and were I permitted, I would kiss his feet, seeing that he has voluntarily become the censor of his own works, and that he now desires to see them banished from the whole world, at the expense, as he says, even of his own blood.

VII.

Our Eternal Safety Consists in Prayer.

Prayer is not only useful, but necessary for salvation; and therefore God, who desires that we should be saved, has enjoined it as a precept, *Seek, and it shall be given you.*[1] It was an error of Wickliff, condemned by the Council of Constance, to say that prayer was a subject of divine counsel to us, and not of command. *It is necessary,*—not, it is advisable or fitting,—*always to pray.*[2] Wherefore Doctors of the Church always say that he cannot be held innocent of grievous sin who neglects to recommend himself to God, at least once in a month, and at all times when he finds himself assaulted by severe temptation.

The reason of this necessity of recommending ourselves often to God arises from our inability to do any good work, or to entertain any good thoughts, of ourselves: *Without Me ye can do nothing.*[3] *We are not sufficient of ourselves to think anything of ourselves.*[4] Therefore, St. Philip Neri said that he despaired of himself. On the other hand, St. Augustine wrote that God desires to

[1] "Petite, et dabitur vobis."—*Matt.* vii. 7.

[2] "Oportet semper orare."—*Luke,* xviii. 1.

[3] "Sine me nihil potestis facere."—*John,* xv. 5.

[4] "Non quod sufficientes simus cogitare aliquid a nobis."—2 *Cor.* iii. 5.

bestow his graces, but only on those who beg them.[1] And, especially, said the saint, God only gives the grace of perseverance to those who seek it.[2]

It is a fact that the devil never ceases to go about to devour us, and therefore we need ever to defend ourselves by prayer. "Continual prayer is necessary for man," said St. Thomas.[3] And Jesus Christ first taught us, *We must always pray, and not faint.*[4] Otherwise, how can we resist the perpetual temptations of the world and the devil? It was the error of Jansenius, condemned by the Church, that the observance of certain precepts was impossible, and that sometimes grace itself fails to render it possible to us. God is faithful, said St. Paul, who does not suffer us to be tempted above our strength.[5] Yet he desires that, when we are tried, we should have recourse to him for help to resist. St. Augustine wrote: "The law is given, that grace may be sought; grace is given, that the law may be fulfilled."[6] Granting that the law cannot be obeyed by us without grace, God has yet given us the law, in order that we may seek the grace to fulfil it; and, therefore, he gives the grace that we may fulfil it. All this was well expressed by the Council of Trent, in these words: "God does not command things that are impossible, but, in commanding us, he counsels thee both to do what thou canst, and seek for aid for what thou canst not do, and he helps thee that thou mayst be able to do it."[7]

[1] "Deus dare vult, sed non dat nisi petenti."—*In Ps.* cii.

[2] "Alia non nisi orantibus Deum præparasse, sicut perseverantiam."—*De dono pers.* c. 16.

[3] "Necessaria est homini jugis oratio."—3. *p. q.* 39, *a.* 5.

[4] "Oportet semper orare, et non deficere."—*Luke*, xviii. 1.

[5] "Fidelis autem Deus est, qui non patietur vos tentari supra id quod potestis."—1 *Cor.* x. 13.

[6] "Lex data est ut gratia quæreretur; gratia data est ut lex impleretur."—*De spir. et litt.* c. 19.

[7] "Deus impossibilia non jubet; sed jubendo monet, et facere quod possis, et petere quod non possis; et adjuvat ut possis."—*Sess.* 6, ch. 11.

Thus, the Lord is ever ready to give us his help, in order that we may not be overcome by temptation; but he only gives this help to those who fly to him in the time of trial, and especially in temptations against chastity, as the Wise Man wrote: *Because I knew that thus only could I preserve continence, if God should grant it, therefore I went to the Lord and besought him.*[1] Let us rest assured that we can never overcome our carnal appetites, if God does not give us help, and this help we cannot have without prayer; but if we pray, we shall assuredly have power to resist the devil in everything, and the strength of God, who strengthens us; as St. Paul says, *I can do all things, through God who strengthens me.*[2]

It is also most useful to us, in order to obtain the divine grace, that we should have recourse to the intercession of the saints, who have great power with God, especially for the benefit of those who have a particular devotion to them. And this is not a mere devotion dependent upon our private fancy, but it is a duty, as St. Thomas writes,[3] that the divine law requires that we mortals should receive the aid which is necessary for our salvation, through the prayers of the saints. Especially this aid comes through the intercession of Mary, whose prayers are of more value than those of all the saints; so much so, indeed, as St. Bernard says, that it is through her intercession that we have access to Jesus Christ our Mediator and Saviour. "Through thee we have access to the Son, O thou giver of grace, and Mother of our salvation! that through thee he may receive us, who through thee was given for us."[4] This,

[1] "Et ut scivi quoniam aliter non possem esse continens, nisi Deus det . . . adii Dominum, et deprecatus sum illum."—*Wis.* viii. 21.

[2] "Omnia possum in eo qui me confortat."—*Phil.* iv. 13.

[3] *In* 4 *sent. d.* 45, q. 3 a. 2.

[4] "Per te accessum habeamus ad Filium, O Inventrix gratiæ, Mater salutis, ut per te nos suscipiat, qui per te datus est nobis."—*In Adv. Dom.* s. 2.

indeed, I have sufficiently proved in my book called "The Glories of Mary;"[1] and, so in my work "On Prayer,"[2] chap. 1, I have brought forward the opinion of many saints, especially St. Bernard, and many theologians, as, for example, Father di Alessandro and Father Contenson, that through Mary we receive all the graces which we receive from God. Hence, also, St. Bernard says, "Let us seek for grace, and let us seek it through Mary; for he that seeks finds, and cannot be deceived."[3] The same was said by St. Peter Damian, St. Bonaventure, St. Bernardine of Sienna, St. Antoninus, and others.

Let us then pray, and pray with confidence, says the Apostle. Let us go boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help us in time of need.[4] Jesus Christ now sits on the throne of grace to comfort all who fly to him, and says, *Seek, and it shall be given to you.*[5] On the day of judgment he will also sit upon his throne, but it will be a throne of judgment; what madness, then, it is in those who, having it in their power to be delivered from their miseries by going to Jesus, now that he sits on his throne of grace, wait till he becomes their judge, and will not avail themselves of his mercy. Now he says to us that whatever we ask of him, if we have confidence, he will give us all. And what more can one friend do to another to show his love than say, "Seek what thou wilt, and I will give it thee."[6] St. James adds more, and says, *If any man need*

[1] P. 1, ch. 5.

[2] P. 1, ch. 1.

[3] "Quæramus gratiam, et per Mariam quæramus; quia quod quærit, invenit, et frustrari non potest."—*De Aquæd.*

[4] "Adeamus ergo cum fiducia ad thronum gratiæ, ut misericordiam consequamur, et gratiam inveniamus in auxilio opportuno."—*Heb.* iv. 16.

[5] Petite, et dabitur vobis.

[6] "Omnia quæcumque orantes petitis, credite quia accipietis, et evenient vobis."—*Mark*, xi. 24.

wisdom, let him ask it of God, who gives to all men liberally, and reproaches not, and it shall be given him.[1] By "wisdom" is here meant the knowledge of the salvation of the soul; to have this wisdom, we must seek of God the graces necessary to bring us to salvation. And will God give them? Most assuredly he will give them, and in still greater abundance than we ask them. Let us observe also the words, "He does not reproach us." If the sinner repents of his sins, and asks salvation from God, God does not that which men do, who reproach the ungrateful with their ingratitude, and deny them what they ask; but he gives it to them willingly, and even more than they beg for. If, then, we would be saved, we must have our lips ever opened to pray, and say, "My God, help me; my God, have mercy; Mary, have mercy." When we cease to pray, we are lost. Let us pray for ourselves: let us pray for sinners, for this is most pleasing to God. Let us pray also daily for holy souls in purgatory; those holy prisoners are most grateful to all who pray for them. Whensoever we pray, let us seek grace of God through the merits of Jesus Christ, for he himself assures us that whatever we ask in his name, he will give it to us.[2]

O my God! this is the grace which, above all others, I ask through the merits of Jesus Christ: grant that throughout my life, and especially in time of temptation, I may recommend myself to Thee, and hope for Thy help through the love of Jesus and Mary. O holy Virgin! obtain for me this grace on which depends my salvation.

[1] "Si quis autem vestrum indiget sapientia, postulet a Deo, qui dat omnibus affluenter et non improperat; et dabitur ei."—*James*, i. 5.

[2] "Amen, amen dico vobis; si quid petieritis Patrem in nomine meo, dabit vobis."—*John*, xvi. 23.

VIII.

I Must One Day Die.

It is a most useful thought for salvation to say often to ourselves, "I must one day die." The Church every year on Ash-Wednesday brings this remembrance to the faithful. *O man, remember that thou art dust, and to dust shalt thou return.*[1] And this certainty of death is brought to our recollection many times in the year; sometimes by the burial-grounds which we pass upon the road, sometimes by the graves which we behold in churches, sometimes by the dead who are carried to burial.

The most precious furniture that was carried by the anchorites to their caves was a cross and a skull; the cross to remind them of the love which Jesus Christ has had for us, and the skull to remind them of the day of their own death. And thus they persevered in penitential works till the end of their days; and thus, dying in poverty in the desert, they died more content than if they had died as kings in their palaces.

The end is at hand; the end is at hand.[2] In this life, one man lives a longer, another a shorter time; but for every one, sooner or later, the end comes; and when that end is here, nothing will comfort us at the point of death but that we have loved Jesus Christ, and have endured with patience the labors of this life for the love of him. Then not the riches we have gained, nor the honors we have obtained, nor the pleasures we have enjoyed, will console us. All the greatness of the world cannot comfort a dying man; it rather adds to his pains; and the more he has gained of it, the more does he suffer. It was said by Sister Margaret of St. Anne, a nun of the Barefooted

[1] "Memento, homo, quia pulvis es, et in pulverem reverteris."—*Gen.* iii. 19.

[2] "Finis venit, venit finis."—*Ezek.* vii. 2.

Carmelites, and daughter of the Emperor Rodolph II.: "What profit is a kingdom in the hour of death?"

Oh, how many worldly persons are there to whom, at the very moment when they are busy in seeking for gain, power, and office, the word of death comes: *Set thy house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live.*[1] Why, O man! hast thou neglected to make thy will till the hour when thou art in sickness? O my God! what pain is suffered by him who is on the point of gaining some lawsuit, or of taking possession of some palace or property, who hears it said by the priest who has come to pray for his soul, "Depart, Christian soul, from this world.[2] Depart from this world, and render thy account to Jesus Christ." "But now," he cries, "I am not well prepared." What matters that? Thou must now depart.

O my God! give me light, give me strength to spend the rest of my life in serving and loving Thee. If now I should die, I should not die content; I should die disturbed. What, then, do I wait for? That death should seize me at a moment of the greatest peril to my soul? O Lord! if I have been mad for the past, I would not be so for the time to come. Now I give myself wholly to Thee; receive me, and help me with Thy grace.

In a word, to every one the *end* comes, and with the end comes that decisive moment on which depends a happy or a wretched eternity. Oh, what a moment, on which eternity depends![3] Oh, that all would think upon that moment, and the account they must give to their judge of their whole life! *Oh, that they were wise, and would understand, and would consider their last end!* Truly,

[1] "Dispone domui tuæ, quia morieris tu, et non vives."—*Isa.* xxxviii. 1.

[2] Proficiscere, anima Christiana, de hoc mundo.

[3] O momentum, a quo pendet æternitas!

[4] "Utinam saperent, et intelligerent, ac novissima providerent!"—*Deut.* xxxii. 29.

they would not then devote themselves to amassing riches, or labor to become great in this perishing world; they would think how to become saints, and to be great in that life which never ends.

If, then, we have faith, let us believe that there is a death, a judgment, an eternity, and labor for the rest of our life to live only for God. And, therefore, let us take care to live as pilgrims in this earth, remembering that we must speedily leave it. Let us live ever with death before our eyes; and, in all the affairs of life, let us take care to act precisely as we should act at the point of death. All things upon earth either leave us, or we leave them. Let us hear Jesus Christ, who says, *Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroy.*[1] Let us despise the treasures of earth, which cannot content us, and speedily end; and let us gain those heavenly treasures which will make us happy, and never be ended.

Miserable I am, O Lord! in that I have so often, for the sake of the goods of this life, turned my back upon Thee, who art the infinite good! I see my folly in having sought for a great name, and for making my fortune in the world. I see what my true happiness is: it is henceforth to love Thee, and in everything to fulfil Thy will. O my Jesus! take from me the desire of gain; make me love neglect and an humble life. Give me strength to deny myself in everything that displeases Thee. Make me embrace, with a calm mind, infirmities, persecutions, desolations, and all the crosses that Thou mayest send me. Oh, that I could die for the love of Thee, abandoned by all, as Thou didst die for me! Holy Virgin, thy prayers can enable me to find my true happiness, which is to love earnestly thy Son. Oh, pray for me; in thee I trust.

[1] "Thesaurizate autem vobis thesauros in cœlo, ubi neque ærugo neque tinea demolitur."—*Matt.* vi. 20.

IX.

Preparation for Death.

Death is certain. "It is appointed to all men once to die." On the other hand, the time and manner of our death are uncertain. Therefore, Jesus Christ exhorts us, "Be ye ready, for ye know not the hour when the Son of man cometh." He says, "Be ye ready;" and, therefore, it is necessary not only to prepare for death when death comes, but we must be ready to embrace it in whatever manner and in whatever circumstances it may come to us. It is accordingly very desirable that every one, at least once a month, should make the following acts of devotion:

Behold, O my God! I am ready to embrace that death which Thou dost destine for me. From this time I embrace it, and I sacrifice my life in honor of Thy Majesty, and also in penance for my sins; being satisfied that this flesh, to please which I have so often offended Thee, should be devoured by worms, and be reduced to dust. O my Jesus! I unite the pains and agonies which I must then suffer to the pains and agonies which Thou, my Saviour, didst suffer in Thy death. I accept death with all the circumstances Thou mayest appoint; I accept its time, whether it be near or distant; I accept the manner, whether in bed or out of it, whether sudden or not, and from that more or less painful illness which may please Thee. In everything I resign myself to Thy holy will. Give me strength to suffer all with patience.

What shall I render to the Lord for all the benefits He hath given to me?[1] I thank Thee, O my God! first for the gift of faith, declaring that I desire to die a son of the holy Catholic Church. I thank Thee for not having

[1] "Quid retribuam Domino pro omnibus quæ retribuit mihi?"—*Ps.* cxv. 12.

caused me to die when I was in sin, and for having so often pardoned me with so much mercy. I thank Thee for so many lights of grace with which Thou hast sought to draw me to Thy love. I pray Thee to grant me to die after receiving the holy Viaticum, that, united with Thee, I may present myself at Thy tribunal. I do not deserve to hear from Thy mouth, *Well done, good and faithful servant; because thou hast been faithful in a few things, I will set thee over many things; enter into the joy of thy Lord.*[1] I do not deserve it, for in nothing have I been perfectly faithful to Thee; but Thy death gives me hope that I shall be admitted to heaven, to love Thee there eternally, and with all my powers.

O my crucified Love! have mercy upon me; look upon me with that love with which Thou didst look upon me from the cross when dying for me. *Remember not the sins of my youth and my ignorance, O Lord.*[2] My sins terrify me, but I am comforted by that cross, on which I see Thee dead through the love of me. "Behold the wood of the cross, on which hung the salvation of the world."[3] I desire to end my life, that I may cease to offend Thee; by the blood that was shed for me, pardon me all my sins before death comes upon me. "O blood of the Innocent, wash away the stains of the guilty."[4]

My Jesus, I embrace Thy cross, and kiss the wounds of Thy holy feet, before which I desire to breathe my soul away. Leave me not at that last hour; "We pray Thee save Thy servants, whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy precious blood."[5] I love Thee with all my heart,

[1] "Euge, serve bone et fidelis; quia super pauca fuisti fidelis, super multa te constituam; intra in gaudium Domini tui."—*Matt.* xxv. 21.

[2] "Delicta juventutis meæ et ignorantias meas ne memineris."—*Ps.* xxiv. 7.

[3] Ecce lignum crucis, in quo salus mundi pependit.

[4] O sanguis innocentis! lava sordes pœnitentis.

[5] Te ergo quæsumus, tuis famulis subveni, quos pretioso sanguine redemisti.

I love Thee more than myself, and I repent with all my soul that I have displeased Thee. O Lord! I was lost, but Thou in Thy goodness hast delivered me from the world; receive, then, my soul from this hour, until that hour when it leaves the world. Therefore, I pray with St. Agatha, "Lord, Thou who hast taken from me the love of this world, receive my soul."[1] In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped; I shall not be confounded forever; Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth![2]

O holy Virgin! help me at the moment of my death; holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for me a sinner, now and at the hour of my death; in thee, O Lady! have I hoped, I shall not be confounded forever. St. Joseph, my protector, obtain for me a holy death. My guardian angel, St. Michael the Archangel, defend me from the evil one in that last conflict. My holy patrons, and all saints in Paradise, succor me in that last hour. Jesus, Joseph, and Mary, be in my company at the hour of my death.

X.

He that Loves God must Love and not Abhor Death.

How can he ever abhor death who is in the grace of God? *He that abideth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.*[3] He, therefore, that loves God is secure of his grace, and, thus dying, he is sure of going to rejoice forever in the kingdom of the blessed; and shall such a one fear death? David truly said, *Enter not into judgment with Thy servant, for in Thy sight shall no man living*

[1] Domine, qui abstulisti a me amorem sæculi, accipe animam meam.

[2] "In te, Domine, speravi; non confundar in æternum; . . . redemisti me, Domine, Deus veritatis."—*Ps.* xxx. 2–6.

[3] "Qui manet in charitate, in Deo manet, et Deus in eo."—1 *John*, iv. 16.

be justified.[1] This means that no man may presume to be saved by his own merits; for no one but Jesus and Mary can say that he has been without sin throughout his life. But he ought not to fear death, if, with true repentance for his sins, he trusts in the merits of Jesus Christ, who came on earth to save sinners. *The Son of man came to save that which was lost.*[2] And for this end he died, and poured forth his blood to save sinners. The blood of Christ Jesus, says the Apostle, speaks more in favor of sinners than the blood of Abel spoke against Cain, who slew him.[3]

It is true that, without a divine revelation, no man can possess an infallible certainty of his own salvation; but he that has given himself with a true heart to God, and is ready to lose everything, even life itself, rather than lose the divine grace, has a moral certainty that he will be saved. This certainty is founded on the divine promises; no man, says the Scripture, ever trusted in God and was confounded.[4] Almighty God declares in many passages that he does not desire the death of the sinner, but that he be converted and live. *Is it My will that a sinner should die, saith the Lord God, and not that he should be converted from his ways, and live?*[5] In another place he makes the same declaration, and adds an oath: *As I live, saith the Lord God, I desire not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live.*[6]

[1] "Et non intres in judicium cum servo tuo, quia non justificabitur in conspectu tuo omnis vivens."—*Ps.* cxlii. 2.

[2] "Venit enim Filius hominis salvare quod perierat."—*Matt.* xviii. 11.

[3] "Accessistis ad . . . Mediatorem Jesum, et sanguinis aspersionem melius loquentem quam Abel."—*Heb.* xii. 22.

[4] "Nullus speravit in Domino, et confusus est."—*Ecclus.* ii. 11.

[5] "Numquid voluntatis meæ est mors impii, dicit Dominus Deus, et non ut convertatur a viis suis, et vivat?"—*Ezek.* xviii. 23.

[6] "Vivo ego, dicit Dominus Deus, nolo mortem impii, sed ut convertatur impius a via sua, et vivat."—*Ezek.* xxxiii. 11.

And, in the same chapter, God laments over those obstinate sinners who choose to perish because they will not leave their sins, and says, *Why will you die, O house of Israel?*[1] And to those who repent of their sins he promises to forget all their iniquities. *If the wicked do penance for all his sins which he hath committed he shall live. . . . I will not remember all his iniquities that he hath done.*[2]

When a sinner also hates the sins he has committed, it is a certain sign that he has been pardoned. A holy Father[3] says that whoever can say, with truth, "I hate and abhor my iniquities,"[4] may be certain that they are forgiven. We have another sign of pardon when we recover grace and persevere in a good life for a considerable time after having sinned. It is also a sure sign to the same effect when we have a fixed resolution to die rather than lose the friendship of God, as also when we earnestly desire to love him, and to see him loved by others, and when we feel distress at seeing him offended.

How is it, then, that certain great saints, after having given themselves wholly to God, and after a life of mortification and detachment from all earthly things, at the hour of death have felt great terror at the thought of appearing before Christ their judge? I reply that those great saints who have suffered these fears at the moment of death have been very few, and that it was the will of God that they should thus purge away the remains of their sins before entering on eternal blessedness; but that, ordinarily speaking, all the saints have died in remarkable peace, and with earnest desires to depart to the presence of God. And for the rest, this is

[1] Et quare moriemini, domus Israel?

[2] "Si autem impius egerit pœnitentiam . . . vita vivet . . . omnium iniquitatum ejus, quas operatus est, non recordabor."—*Ezek.* xviii. 21.

[3] *Bas. M. Reg. brev. int.* 12.

[4] "Iniquitatem odio habui, et abominatus sum."—*Ps.* cxviii. 163.

the very difference between sinners and saints at the hour of death, that sinners from fear pass on to despair, and saints from fear pass on to confidence, and thus die in peace.

Therefore, every one who has a hope that he is in the grace of God ought to desire death, repeating the prayer which Christ Jesus has taught us, "Thy kingdom come;" and he ought to embrace death with joy when it comes that he may thus be freed from sin, and leave this world, where no one lives without imperfections, and go to behold God, face to face, and love him with all his powers in the kingdom of love.

O my beloved Jesus and my judge! when Thou dost judge me, for Thy mercy condemn me not to hell. In hell I cannot love Thee, but must hate Thee forever; and how can I hate Thee who art so worthy of love, and who hast so loved me? If Thou wilt condemn me to hell, at least grant me grace to be able to love Thee there with all my heart. This grace I do not deserve, through my sins; but if I do not deserve it, Thou hast purchased it for me with the blood which Thou didst shed with such anguish for me upon the cross. O my Judge! inflict on me every pain, but deprive me not of the power of loving Thee. O Mother of God! behold the peril in which I stand of being condemned to be unable to love thy Son, who deserves an infinite love; help me; have pity on me.

XI.

Our Salvation is in the Cross.

"Behold the wood of the cross, on which hung the salvation of the world!"[1] So sings the holy Church on Good Friday. In the cross is our salvation, our strength against temptations, our detachment from earthly pleas-

[1] Ecce lignum crucis, in quo salus mundi pependit.

ures; in the cross is found the true love of God. We must, therefore, resolve to bear with patience that cross which Jesus Christ sends us, and to die upon it for the sake of Jesus Christ, as he died upon his cross for the love of us. There is no other way to enter heaven but to resign ourselves to tribulations until death. And thus may we find peace, even in suffering. When the cross comes, what means is there for not loving peace, except the uniting of ourselves to the divine will? If we do not take this means, let us go where we will, let us do what we may, we shall never fly from the weight of the cross. On the other hand, if we carry it with good-will, it will bear us to heaven, and give us peace upon earth.

What does he gain who refuses the cross? He increases its weight. But he who embraces it, and bears it with patience, lightens its weight, and the weight itself becomes a consolation; for God abounds with grace to all those who carry the cross with good-will in order to please him. By the law of nature there is no pleasure in suffering; but divine love, when it reigns in a heart, makes it take delight in its sufferings.

Oh, that we would consider the happy condition we shall enjoy in Paradise, if we be faithful to God, in enduring toils without lamenting; if we do not complain against God, who commands us to suffer, but say with Job, *Let this be my comfort, that he should not spare in afflicting me, nor contradict the words of the Holy One.*[1] If we are sinners and have deserved hell, this should be our comfort in the tribulations which befall us, that we should be chastised in this life; because this is the sure sign that God will deliver us from eternal chastisement. Miserable is that sinner who prospers in this world! Whoever suffers a bitter trial, let him cast a glance at the hell

[1] "Hæc mihi sit consolatio, ut affligens me dolore non parcat, nec contradicam sermonibus Sancti."—*Job*, vi. 10.

which he has deserved, and thus the pains he endures will seem light. If, then, we have committed sins, this ought to be our continual prayer to God, "O Lord, spare not pains, but give me, I pray Thee, strength to endure them with patience, that I may not oppose myself to Thy holy will. I will not oppose the words of the Holy One; in everything I unite myself to that which Thou wilt appoint for me, saying always, with Jesus Christ, *Even so, Father; for so hath it seemed good to Thee.*[1]

The soul which is governed by divine love seeks only God. When a man has given all the substance of his house for love, he will despise it as nothing.[2] He that loves God despises and renounces everything that does not help him to love God; and in all the good works that he does, in his penitential acts and his labors for the glory of God, he seeks not consolations and sweetnesses of spirit; it is enough for him to know that he pleases God. In a word, he ever strives in all things to deny himself, renouncing every pleasure of his own; and then he boasts of nothing and is puffed up with nothing; but calls himself an unprofitable servant, and, setting himself in the lowest place, he abandons himself to the divine will and mercy

We must change our tastes in order to become saints. If we do not arrive at a state in which bitter appears sweet, and sweet bitter, we shall never attain to a perfect union with God. In this consist all our security and perfection: in suffering with resignation all things that are contrary to our inclinations, as they happen to us day by day, whether they are small or great. And we must suffer them for those purposes for which the Lord desires that we should endure them: (1) to purify ourselves from the sins we have committed; (2) to merit

[1] "Ita, Pater! quoniam sic fuit placitum ante te."—*Matt.* xi. 26.

[2] "Si dederit homo omnem substantiam domus suæ pro dilectione, quasi nihil despiciet eam."—*Cant.* viii. 7.

eternal life; (3) to please God, which is the chief and most noble end at which we can aim in all our doings.

Let us, then, ever offer ourselves to God, to suffer every cross that he may send us; and let us take care to be ever ready to endure every toil for the love of him, in order that, when it comes we may be ready to embrace it, saying, as Jesus Christ said to Peter when he was taken in the garden by the Jews to be led to death, *The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?*[1] God hath given me this cross for my good, and shall I say to him that I will not receive it?

And whenever the weight of any cross seems very heavy, let us immediately have recourse to prayer, and God will give us strength to endure it meritoriously. And let us then recollect what St. Paul said, that no tribulation of this world, however grievous it may be, can be compared with the glory which God prepares for us in the world to come.[2] Let us, therefore, reanimate our faith whenever tribulations afflict us; let us first cast our eyes upon the crucified One, who was in agonies for us upon the cross, and let us look also at Paradise, and on the blessings that God prepares for those who suffer for his love; and thus we shall not be faint-hearted, but shall thank him for the pains he gives us to suffer, and shall desire that he may give us more to suffer. Oh, how the saints rejoice in heaven, not that they have possessed honors and pleasures upon earth, but that they have suffered for Jesus Christ! Everything that passes is trifling; that only is great which is eternal, and never passes away.

O my Jesus! how comforting is that which Thou sayest to me, *Turn unto Me, and I will turn to you.*[3] For the

[1] "Calicem quem dedit mihi Pater, non bibam illum?"—*John*, xviii. 11.

[2] "Non sunt condignæ passiones hujus temporis ad futuram gloriam, quæ revelabitur in nobis."—*Rom.* viii. 18.

[3] "Convertimini ad me, et convertar ad vos."—*Zach.* i. 3.

sake of creatures, and of my own miserable tastes, I have left Thee; now I leave all, and turn to Thee; and I am confident that Thou wilt not reject me, if I desire to love Thee; for Thou hast told me that Thou art ready to embrace me. Receive me, then, into Thy grace; make me know the great good that Thou art, and the love that Thou hast borne to me, that I may no more leave Thee. O my Jesus! pardon me; O my beloved! pardon me the offences I have committed against Thee. Give me the love of Thee, and then do with me what Thou wilt. Chastise me as much as Thou wilt; deprive me of everything, but deprive me not of Thyself. Were the whole world to come and offer me all its blessings, I declare that I desire Thee alone, and nothing more. O my Mother! recommend me to thy Son· he giveth thee whatever thou askest; in thee I trust.

XII.

[How much it Pleases Jesus Christ that we Suffer for the Love of Him.

If any one will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.[1] It will be useful to make a few reflections on these words of Jesus Christ. He says, "If any one will come after Me;" he does not say, "to me," but, "after me." The Lord desires that we should come close after him; we must therefore walk in the same road of thorns and sufferings in which he walked. He goes before, and does not rest until he reaches Calvary, where he dies; therefore, if we love him, we must follow him even to death. And thus it is necessary that every one should deny himself; that is, that he should deny himself everything that self-love demands, but that is not pleasing to Jesus Christ.

[1] "Si quis vult post me venire, abneget semetipsum, et tollat crucem suam quotidie, et sequatur me."—*Luke,* ix. 23.

Our Lord says further, "Let him take up his cross daily, and follow Me." Let us consider these last words one by one. *Let him take up;* it avails little to carry the cross by compulsion; all sinners bear it, but without merit; to bear it with merit, we must embrace it voluntarily. *His cross;* under this word is implied every kind of tribulation, which is called a "cross" by Jesus Christ, in order that the name may render it sweet, from the thought that he died on the cross for love of us.

He also says, "his cross." Some persons when they receive spiritual consolations, offer themselves to suffer as great things as were endured by the martyrs,—hot irons, piercing nails, and tortures; but then they cannot endure a headache, the carelessness of a friend, the ill temper of a relative. My brother, my sister, God does not ask you to endure hot irons, piercing nails, and tortures; but he desires that you should suffer patiently this pain, this annoyance, this contempt. A certain nun would fain go to suffer in a desert; she would perform great acts of penance; but yet she cannot endure such a one for her Superior, or such a one for her companion in her duties; but God desires that she should bear that cross which he gives her to suffer, and not that which she would herself choose.

He says *daily*. Some persons embrace the cross at the beginning, when it reaches them; but when it lasts long, they say, "Now I can bear no more." Yet God wills that we should go on to endure it with patience, and even that we should bear it continually, even till death. See, then, that salvation and perfection consist in these three words, *let him deny;* we must deny to our self-love whatever is not right: *let him take up;* we must embrace the cross that God gives us: *let him follow,* we must follow the footsteps of Jesus Christ even to death.

Let us be persuaded that for this end God keeps us in the world, that we may bear the crosses he sends us; and

in this consists the merit of our life. Therefore our Saviour, because he loves us, came into this world, not for enjoyment, but to suffer, in order that we might follow in his steps. *To this end you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow his steps.*[1] Let us watch him, as he goes before with his cross, to point out the road by which we must follow him, if we would be saved Oh, what a joy it is, in every trouble that befalls us, to say to Jesus Christ, "Lord, is it Thy will that I should endure this cross? I accept it, and will endure it as long as it pleases Thee."

Many persons are delighted to hear one speak of prayer, of peace, of love to Jesus Christ; but they find little pleasure in hearing one speak of crosses or of suffering. These are satisfied so long as the wind breathes with spiritual delights, but if it ceases, and there comes some adversity or desolation, in which the Lord hides himself in order to prove them, and deprives them of their usual comfort, they leave off prayer, Communion, and mortifications, and abandon themselves to ill-humor and lukewarmness, seeking their pleasure from earthly things But these souls love themselves more than Jesus Christ; while they who do not love him with an interested love, for the sake of consolations, but with a pure love, and only because he is worthy of love, do not leave their usual devout exercises for any dryness or weariness which they experience, being content to please God; and they offer themselves to suffer this desolation even till death, and through all eternity, if God so will it. Jesus Christ, says St. Francis de Sales, is as kind in desolation as in consolation. Souls that love God find their comfort and sweetness in suffering; in recollecting that they suffer for his love, and say, "How sweet it is, O my Lord!

[1] "In hoc enim vocati estis, quia et Christus passus est pro nobis, vobis relinquens exemplum, ut sequamini vestigia ejus."—1 *Peter*, ii. 21.

to those who love Thee to suffer for Thee! Oh, that I might die for the love of Thee, my Jesus, who hast died for me!" All this, and still more, is claimed from us by Jesus Christ, who chose a life of pains, and a bitter death, without the slightest relief, for love of us; in order to teach us that if we would love him, we must love him as he loved us. Oh, how dear to Jesus Christ is a soul which suffers and loves! O divine gift! gift, above every other gift; to love in suffering, and to suffer in loving!

O my Jesus! Thou alone hast been able to teach us these maxims of salvation, all contrary to the maxims of the world; and Thou alone canst give us strength to suffer crosses with patience. I do not pray Thee to exempt me from suffering; I only pray Thee to give me strength to suffer with patience and resignation. O Eternal Father, Thy Son has promised that whatever we ask Thee in his name, Thou wilt give it us.[1] Behold, we ask this of Thee: give us grace to endure with patience the pains of this life; hear us for the love of Jesus Christ. And Thou, O my Jesus! pardon me all the offences I have committed against Thee, in that I have not been willing to suffer with patience the troubles Thou hast sent me. Give me Thy love, that it may give me strength to suffer all for love of Thee. Deprive me of everything, of every earthly good, of relatives, friends, health of body, of every comfort; deprive me even of life; but not of Thy love. Give me Thyself, and I ask no more. O most holy Virgin! obtain for me an enduring love for Jesus Christ, even till death.

[1] "Amen, amen dico vobis: si quid petieritis Patrem in nomine meo, dabit vobis."—*John*, xvi. 23.

XIII.

Divine Love Conquers All Things.

Love is strong as death.[1] As death separates us from all the good things of the world, from riches, honors, kindred, friends, and all earthly pleasures, so the love of God, when it reigns in a heart, strips it of all affection for these perishing advantages. Therefore the saints have thought fit to strip themselves of everything the world offered them, to renounce their possessions, their posts of honor, and all they had, and to fly to deserts or cloisters, to think upon and to love God alone.

The soul cannot exist without loving either the Creator or its creatures. Grant that a soul is weaned from every other love, and you will find it filled with love divine. Would we know whether we have given ourselves wholly to God? Let us examine ourselves whether we are weaned from every earthly thing.

Some persons lament that in all their devotions, prayers, communions, visits to the Blessed Sacrament, they do not find God. To such St. Teresa says, "Detach thy heart from creatures, and then go seek God, and thou shalt find him." Thou wilt not find a continual spiritual sweetness which God does not give without interruption to those who love him in this life, but only from time to time, to make them fly onwards towards those boundless delights which he prepares for them in paradise; but yet he gives them that inward peace which excels all sensual delights; that peace of God which passes all sense.[2] And what greater delight can be enjoyed by a soul that loves God than to be able to say, with true affection, "My God and my all?" St. Francis of Assisi continued a whole night in an ecstasy of paradise, continually repeating these words, "My God and my all."

[1] "Fortis est ut mors dilectio."—*Cant.* viii. 6.

[2] "Pax Dei, quæ exsuperat omnem sensum."—*Phil.* iv. 7.

"Love is as strong as death." If a dying man were to give a sign of moving towards any earthly thing, we should then know that he was not dead; death deprives us of everything. He that would give himself altogether to God must leave everything. If he reserves any one thing, he gives a sign that his love for God is not strong, but weak.

Divine love strips us of everything. Father Segneri, the younger, an eminent servant of God (whose life was written by Muratori), said: "Love to God is a beloved thief, which robs us of every earthly thing." Another servant of God, when he had given to the poor all his possessions, and was asked what had reduced him to such poverty, took the book of the Gospels out of his pocket, and said, "This has robbed me of everything." In a word, Jesus Christ will possess our whole heart, and he will have no companion there. St. Augustine writes that the Roman senate refused to allow adoration to be paid to Jesus Christ because he was a haughty God who claimed to be honored alone; and truly as he is our only Lord, he has the right to be adored and loved with our unmingled love.

St. Francis de Sales said that the pure love of God consumes everything that is not God. When, then, we see in our heart any affection for anything that is not God, or not for the sake of God, we must instantly banish it, saying, "Depart, there is no place for thee." In this consists that complete renunciation which our Lord recommends, if we would be wholly his. It must be *complete;* that is, of everything, and especially of our friends and kindred. How many, for the sake of men, have never become saints! David said that they who please men are despised by God.[1]

But, above all, we must renounce ourselves by con-

[1] "Qui hominibus placent, confusi sunt, quoniam Deus sprevit eos."—*Ps.* lii. 6.

quering self-love. Cursed is self-love, which thrusts itself into everything, even our most holy actions, by placing before us our own love of pleasure! How many preachers, how many writers, have thus lost all their labors! Constantly, even in prayer, in spiritual reading, in the Holy Communion, there enters some end not pure, either the desire of being noticed, or of obtaining mere spiritual pleasures. We must, therefore, strive to conquer this enemy, who would ruin our best deeds. We must deprive ourselves, as far as possible, of everything that pleases us; we must deprive ourselves of this pleasure, for the very reason that it is agreeable; we must do a service to this ungrateful person, because he is ungrateful; we must take this bitter medicine, because it is bitter. Self-love makes it appear that nothing is good in which we do not find our own personal satisfaction; but he that would wholly belong to God must do force to himself whenever he is employed in anything that is according to his own pleasure, and say always, "Let me lose everything, so that I please God."

For the rest, no one is more contented with the world than he who despises all the good things of the world. The more he strips himself of such good things, the richer he becomes in divine grace. Thus does the Lord know how to reward those who love him faithfully. But, O my Jesus! Thou knowest my weakness; Thou hast promised to help those who trust in Thee. Lord, I love Thee; in Thee I trust; give me strength, and make me wholly Thine. In thee also I trust, O my sweet advocate, Mary!

XIV.

The Necessity of Mental Prayer.

Mental prayer is, in the first place, necessary, in order that we may have light to go on the journey to eternity. Eternal truths are spiritual things that are not seen with

the eyes of the body, but only by the reflection of the mind. He that does not meditate, does not see them; and thus he advances with difficulty along the way of salvation. And, further, he does not meditate, does not know his own failings, and thus, says St. Bernard,[1] he does not detest them; so, also, he does not see the perils of his state, and therefore does not think of avoiding them. But when we meditate, our failings and perils quickly present themselves; and when we see them we seek to remedy them. St. Bernard said that meditation regulates our affections, directs our actions, and corrects our defects.[2]

In the second place, without meditation we have no strength for resisting temptations and practising virtues. St. Teresa said that when a man leaves off meditation, the devil has no need of carrying him to hell, for he throws himself into it. And the reason is, that without meditation there is no prayer. God has every willingness to give us his graces; but St. Gregory said that before giving them he desires to be asked, and that he is, as it were, compelled to give them through our prayers.[3] But without prayer we shall have no strength to resist our enemies, and thus shall not obtain perseverance in what is good. Palafox, in his note upon the tenth letter of St. Teresa, wrote thus: "How will the Lord give us perseverance if we do not ask for it? and how shall we ask it without meditation?" While he who practises meditation is like a tree planted by the water-side.[4]

And, further, meditation is the happy furnace in which

[1] *De Cons.* l. 1, c. 2.

[2] "Consideratio regit affectus, dirigit actus, corrigit excessus."—*Ibid.* c. 7.

[3] "Vult Deus rogari, vult cogi, vult quadam importunitate vinci."—*In Ps. Pœnit.* 6.

[4] "Erit tamquam lignum quod plantatum est secus decursus aquarum."—*Ps.* i. 3.

souls are inflamed with divine love; "in my meditation a fire shall flame out."[1] St. Catherine of Bologna said, "Meditation is the bond which binds the soul to God; the king brought me into the wine-cellar, he fixed his love upon me."[2] This wine-cellar is meditation, in which the soul becomes so inebriated with divine love that it loses, as it were, its sense for the things of the world; it sees only that which pleases its beloved; it speaks only of the beloved; it would only hear of the beloved; every other discourse wearies and troubles it. In meditation, the soul, retiring to converse alone with God, rests upon itself: *He shall sit solitary and hold his peace; because he hath taken it upon himself.*[3] When the soul *sits*,—that is, shuts itself up in meditation to consider how worthy is God of love, and how great is the love he bears to it,—it thus tastes of God, and fills itself with holy thoughts, and detaches itself from earthly affections, and conceives great desires for becoming holy, and finally resolves to give itself wholly to God. And where but in meditation have the saints made their most generous resolutions, which have lifted them up to the highest point of perfection?

Let us hear what St. John of the Cross said, speaking of mental prayer: "Here we open our heart, here we learn sweet doctrine, and make ourselves wholly to belong to God, reserving nothing, and espousing ourselves to him." And St. Aloysius Gonzaga said that no one will ever attain a high degree of perfection who is not much given to meditation. Let us, then, earnestly apply ourselves to it, and not leave it for any weariness that we may experience; this weariness which we endure for God will be abundantly recompensed by him.

[1] "In meditatione mea exardescet ignis."—*Ps.* xxxviii. 4.

[2] Introduxit me in cellam vinariam, ordinavit in me charitatem.

[3] "Sedebit solitarius, et tacebit; quia levavit super se."—*Lam.* iii. 28.

Pardon me, O my God, my slothfulness; what treasures of grace have I lost in so often neglecting to meditate! For the future give me grace to be faithful through life in conversing with Thee, with whom I hope to converse forever in heaven. I do not ask Thee to delight me here with Thy consolations; I do not deserve it; it is enough that Thou dost suffer me to approach Thy feet to recommend to Thee my poor soul, which is thus miserable because it has separated itself from Thee. Here, O my crucified Jesus! the sole memory of Thy Passion shall keep me detached from earth, and united with Thee. O holy Virgin Mary! aid me with thy prayers.

XV.

The Object of Mental Prayer.

In order to practise mental prayer, or meditation, well, and to make it truly profitable to the soul, we must well ascertain the ends for which we attempt it. First, we must meditate in order to unite ourselves more completely to God. It is not so much good thoughts in the intelligence, as good acts of the will, or holy desires, that unite us to God; and such are the acts that we perform in meditation, acts of humility, confidence, self-sacrifice, resignation, and especially of love and of repentance for our sins. Acts of love, says St. Teresa, are those that keep the soul inflamed with holy love.

Secondly, we must meditate in order to obtain from God, by prayer, the graces that are necessary in order to enable us to advance in the way of salvation, to avoid sin, and to take the means that will lead us to perfection. The best fruit, then, that comes from meditation is the exercise of prayer. Almighty God, ordinarily speaking, does not give grace to any but those who pray. St. Gregory writes, "God desires to be entreated, he

desires to be constrained, he desires to be, as it were, conquered by importunity."[1] Observe his words, "to be conquered by importunity." At times, in order to obtain graces of special value, it is not enough simply to pray; we must pray urgently, and, as it were, compel God, by our prayers, to give them. It is true that at all times the Lord is ready to hear us; but at the time of meditation, when we are most truly in converse with God, he is most bountiful in giving us his aid.

Above all, we must apply to meditation, in order to obtain perseverance and the holy love of God. Final perseverance is not a single grace, but a chain of graces, to which must correspond the chain of our prayers; if we cease to pray, God will cease to give us his help, and we shall perish. He who does not practise meditation will find the greatest difficulty in persevering in grace till death. Palafox, in his notes on St. Teresa's letters, writes thus: "How will the Lord give us perseverance, if we do not ask it? And how shall we ask for it without meditation? Without meditation there is no communion with God."

Thus must we be urgent with prayers to obtain from God his holy love. St. Francis de Sales said that all virtues come in union with holy love. *All good things came to me together with her.*[2] Let our prayer for perseverance and love, therefore, be continual; and, in order to pray with greater confidence, let us ever bear in mind the promise made us by Jesus Christ, that whatever we seek from God through the merits of his Son, he will give it us.[3] Let us, then, pray, and pray always, if we would that God should make us bound in every blessing.

[1] Vult Deus rogari, vult cogi, vult quadam importunitate vinci.

[2] "Venerunt autem mihi omnia bona pariter cum illa."—*Wis.* vii. 11.

[3] "Amen, amen dico vobis: si quid petieritis Patrem in nomine meo, dabit vobis."—*John*, xvi. 23.

Let us pray for ourselves, and, if we have zeal for the glory of God, let us pray also for others. It is a thing most pleasing to God to be entreated for unbelievers and heretics, and all sinners. *Let the people confess to Thee, O God! let all the people confess to Thee.*[1] Let us say, O Lord! make them know Thee, make them love Thee. We read in the lives of St. Teresa and St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi how God inspired these holy women to pray for sinners. And to prayer for sinners let us also add prayers for the holy souls in purgatory.

Thirdly: we must apply ourselves to meditation, not for the sake of spiritual consolations, but chiefly in order to learn what is the will of God concerning us. *Speak, Lord*, said Samuel to God, *for Thy servant heareth.*[2] Lord, make me to know what Thou wilt, that I may do it. Some persons continue meditation as long as consolations continue; but when these cease, they leave off meditation. It is true that God is accustomed to comfort his beloved souls at the time of meditation, and to give them some foretaste of the delights he prepares in heaven for those who love him. These are things which the lovers of the world do not comprehend; they who have no taste except for earthly delights despise those that are celestial. Oh, if they were wise, how surely would they leave their pleasures to shut themselves in their closets, to speak alone with God! Meditation is nothing more than a converse between the soul and God; the soul pours forth to him its affections, its desires, its fears, its requests, and God speaks to the heart, causing it to know his goodness, and the love which he bears it, and what it must do to please him. *I will lead her into solitude, and speak to her heart.*[3]

[1] "Confiteantur tibi populi, Deus, confiteantur tibi populi omnes."—*Ps.* lxvi. 6.

[2] "Loquere, Domine, quia audit servus tuus."—1 *Kings*, iii. 9.

[3] "Ducam eam in solitudinem, et loquar ad cor ejus."—*Osee*, ii. 14.

But these delights are not constant, and, for the most part, holy souls experience much dryness of spirit in meditation. "With dryness and temptations," says St. Teresa, "the Lord makes proof of those who love him." And she adds, "Even if this dryness lasts through life, let not the soul leave off meditation; the time will come when all will be well rewarded." The time of dryness is the time for gaining the greatest rewards; and when we find ourselves apparently without fervor, without good desires, and, as it were, unable to do a good act, let us humble ourselves, and resign ourselves, for this very meditation will be more fruitful than others. It is enough then to say, if we can say nothing more, "O Lord! help me, have mercy on me, abandon me not!" Let us also have recourse to our comforter, the most holy Mary. Happy he who does not leave off meditation in the hour of desolation. God will make him abound in graces; and therefore let him say:

"O my God, how can I expect to be comforted by Thee! I, who, until this hour, have deserved to be in hell, forever separated from Thee, and deprived of the power of loving Thee any more! I do not therefore grieve, O my God! that Thou deprivest me of Thy consolations; I do not deserve them; I do not pretend to them. It is enough for me to know that Thou wilt never repel a soul that loves Thee. Deprive me not of the power of loving Thee, and then do with me what Thou wilt. If thou wilt that I continue thus afflicted and desolate even till death, and through all eternity, I am content; it is enough that I can say with truth, 'O my God, I love Thee, I love Thee!' Mary, Mother of God, have pity on me!"

XVI.

The Mercy of God.

So great is the desire which God has to give us his graces that, as St. Augustine says, he has more desire to give them to us than we have to receive them from him.[1] And the reason is, that goodness, as the philosophers say, is of its own nature *diffusive;* it is compelled by itself to pour itself forth in benefits to others. God, therefore, being infinite goodness, possesses an infinite desire to communicate himself to us, his creatures, and to make us share his gifts.

Hence flows the boundless pity which the Lord has for our miseries. David said that the earth is full of the divine mercy.[2] It is not full of the divine justice, inasmuch as God does not exercise his justice in punishing evil-doers, except when it is necessary; and he is, as it were, compelled to call it into operation. On the other hand, he is bounteous and liberal in showing forth his mercy to all, and at all times; whence St. James says, *Mercy is exalted over justice.*[3] Mercy herself frequently stays the strokes which are prepared for sinners by the hand of justice, and obtains their pardon. Therefore the prophet calls God by the very name of mercy: *My God, my mercy!*[4] And for the same reason he says, *For Thy name's sake, O Lord, be merciful to my sin.*[5] Lord, pardon me for Thy name's sake, for it is mercy itself.

Isaias said that chastisement is a work which is not dear to the heart of God, but alien and foreign to it, as

[1] "Plus vult ille dare, quam nos accipere."—*Serm.* 105 *E. B.*

[2] "Misericordia Domini plena est terra."—*Ps.* xxxii. 5.

[3] "Superexaltat autem misericordia judicium."—*James*, ii. 13.

[4] "Deus meus, misericordia mea."—*Ps.* lviii. 18.

[5] "Propter nomen tuum, Domine, propitiaberis peccato meo."—*Ps.* xxiv. 11.

if he would say that it was far from his inclinations: *The Lord shall be angry, as in the valley which is in Gabaon; that he may do His work, His strange work; that He may perform His work, His work is strange to Him.*[1] His mercy it was that brought him to send his own Son on earth to be made man, and to die upon a cross to deliver us from eternal death. Therefore, Zacharias exclaimed, *Through the bowels of the mercy of our God, when the day star visited us from on high.*[2] The expression the "bowels of the mercy of God" implies a mercy which proceeds from the depth of the heart of God, through which he preferred that his own Son should die, rather than we should perish.

In order to see how great is the goodness of God towards us, and the desire he has to give us his blessings, it is enough to read these few words of the Gospel: *Seek, and it shall be given you.*[3] Who could say more to a friend to show him his affection? Yet this is what God says to every one of us. Seeing our misery, he invites us to come to him, and promises to relieve us: *Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you.*[4] The Jews, on one occasion, complained of God, and said they would no longer go and seek his graces; wherefore he said to Jeremias, *Why will not My people come to Me? am I become a desert, or a land slow of produce, which yields no fruit, or yields it out of season?*[5] At the same time the Lord was willing to explain the wrong

[1] "Dominus . . . irascetur; ut faciat opus suum, alienum opus ejus . . . peregrinum est opus ejus ab eo."—*Is.* xxviii. 21.

[2] "Per viscera misericordiæ Dei nostri, in quibus visitavit nos oriens ex alto."—*Luke,* i. 78.

[3] "Petite, et dabitur vobis."—*Matt.* vii. 7.

[4] "Venite ad me omnes, qui laboratis et onerati estis, et ego reficiam vos."—*Matt.* xi. 28.

[5] "Numquid solitudo factus sum Israeli, aut terra serotina? quare ergo dixit populus meus: Recessimus, non veniemus ultra ad te."—*Jer.* ii. 31.

which the Jews did to him, while he is ever ready to comfort every one who comes to him, as he said by Isaias, *As soon as He shall hear, He will answer thee.*[1]

Art thou a sinner, and wilt thou have pardon? "Doubt not," said St. John Chrysostom, "that God has more desire to pardon thee than thou hast to be pardoned."[2] If, then, God sees any one obstinate in his sin, he waits in order to shower mercy upon him.[3] And therefore he points out the torment that awaits him, in order that he may learn wisdom. *Thou hast given a warning to them that fear Thee, that they may flee from before the bow.*[4] Now he stands and knocks at the door of our hearts, that we may open to him: *Behold, I stand at the door, and knock.*[5] And again he urges his people, saying, *Why will ye die, O house of Israel?*[6] As if he were saying, in compassion, "O my son, why wilt thou perish?" St. Dionysius the Areopagite writes: "God even entreats those who turn from him as a lover, and entreats them not to perish."[7] And this very thing was written before by the Apostle, when he entreated sinners, on the part of Jesus Christ, to be reconciled with God;[8] on which Chrysostom remarks, "Christ himself is beseeching you, and what is it that he prays you?—*that ye would be reconciled to God.*"[9]

[1] "Statim ut audierit, respondebit tibi."—*Isa.* xxx. 19.

[2] "Non adeo cupis dimitti peccata tua, sicut ille dimittere."—*In Act. hom.* 36.

[3] "Expectat Dominus, ut misereatur vestri."—*Isa.* xxx. 18.

[4] "Dedisti metuentibus te significationem, ut fugiant a facie arcus, ut liberentur dilecti tui."—*Ps.* lix. 6.

[5] "Ecce, sto ad ostium, et pulso."—*Apoc.* iii. 20.

[6] "Et quare moriemini, domus Israel?"—*Ezek.* xviii. 31.

[7] "Deus etiam a se aversos amatorie sequitur, et deprecatur ne pereant."—*Ep. ad Dem.*

[8] "Obsecramus pro Christo, reconciliamini Deo."—2 *Cor.* v. 20.

[9] "Ipse Christus vos obsecrat: quid obsecrat? reconciliamini Deo."—*In* 2 *Cor. hom.* 11.

If, then, some determine to continue obstinate, what more can God do? He makes all understand that whosoever he sees come to him in penitence he will not cast away: *Him that cometh to Me, I will not cast out.*[1] He says that he is ready to embrace every one who turns to him: *Turn unto Me, and I will turn unto you.*[2] He promises to every ungodly man that if he repents he will pardon him, and forget his sins: *If the wicked do penance, he shall live; I will forget all his iniquity that he hath committed.*[3] He even says, *Come, and let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow.*[4] As though he would say, "Come, penitent, unto me, and if I embrace you not, rebuke me as one who has failed in his word."

No; the Lord knoweth not how to despise a contrite heart. *A contrite and humble heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.*[5] We read in St. Luke[6] with what joy he embraced the lost sheep, and with what love he welcomed the prodigal son when he returned to his feet. And God himself says that there is more joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth than over ninety and nine just persons.[7] St. Gregory explains the reason of this by saying that very often sinners, when pardoned, are most fervent in loving God, while those who have not thus fallen grow lukewarm in their security.[8]

[1] "Eum qui venit ad me, non ejiciam foras."—*John*, vi. 37.

[2] "Convertimini ad me . . . et convertar ad vos."—*Zach.* i. 3.

[3] "Si autem impius egerit pœnitentiam . . . vita vivet; omnium iniquitatum ejus . . non recordabor."—*Ezek.* xviii. 21.

[4] "Venite, et arguite me . . . si fuerint peccata vestra ut coccinum, quasi nix dealbabuntur."—*Isa.* i. 18.

[5] "Cor contritum et humiliatum, Deus, non despicies."—*Ps.* l. 19.

[6] *Luke*, xv. 5–20.

[7] Dico vobis, quod ita gaudium erit in cœlo super uno peccatore pœnitentiam agente, quam super nonaginta novem justis.

[8] "Fit plerumque Deo gratior amore ardens vita post culpam, quam securitate torpens innocentia."—*Past.* l. 3, *adm.* 29.

O my Jesus! as Thou hast had so great patience with me in waiting for me, and so great love in pardoning me, as I trust I would love Thee with all my heart; but this love Thou must give me. Give it me! O my Lord! and little honor is it to Thee that I, a sinner so favored by Thee, should love Thee in some little degree. O my Jesus! when shall I begin to be grateful to Thee, as Thou hast been gracious to me? For the past, instead of being grateful to Thee, I have offended Thee, and despised Thee. Shall I, then, hereafter ever live thus turned away from Thee, who hast spared nothing to gain my love? No, my Saviour! I would love Thee with all my heart—I would never displease Thee. Thou commandest me to love Thee, and I desire nothing but to love Thee. Thou seekest me, and I seek nothing but Thee. Give me Thy help, without which I can do nothing. O Mary, O Mother of Mercy! draw me altogether to God.

XVII.

Confidence in Jesus Christ.

Wonderfully great, as has been said, is the mercy of Jesus Christ to us; but for our greater good he desires that we should put our trust in his mercy, with a lively confidence, trusting in his merits and his promises. Therefore, St. Paul recommends us to preserve this confidence, saying that it has a great reward from God.[1] And therefore, when a fear of the divine judgment seems to diminish this confidence in us, we ought to chase it away, and say to ourselves, as the learned Dr. Saverio Mattei writes in his excellent version of the Psalms, on Psalm xli.:[2] "My heart, dost thou tremble? knowest thou

[1] "Nolite itaque amittere confidentiam vestram, quæ magnam habet remunerationem."—*Heb.* x. 35.

[2] Quare tristis es, anima mea? et quare conturbas me? Spera in Deo, quoniam adhuc confitebor illi: salutare vultus mei, et Deus meus.

not how to hope? Banish thy fear, and tremble not. Why wilt thou trouble me? Hope in the Lord, that we may one day sing his praise and glory."

The Lord revealed to St. Gertrude that our confidence so constrains him that he cannot possibly refuse to hear us in everything we seek of him. The same thing was said by St. Climachus: "Prayer exerts a holy violence upon God."[1] Every prayer offered with confidence, as it were, forces God; but this force is acceptable and pleasing to him. Therefore, St. Bernard writes that the divine mercy is like a vast fountain, from which whosoever brings a larger vessel of confidence carries away a larger abundance of graces. And this is according to what the Psalmist wrote, *Let Thy mercy be upon us, O Lord, according as we have put our trust in Thee.*[2]

God has declared that he protects and saves all who trust in him.[3] Let them, then, rejoice. David said, "All who hope in Thee, my God, shall be blessed forever, and Thou wilt ever dwell in them."[4] The same prophet said, *Mercy is round about all who trust in God.*[5] He that trusts in God shall be ever so circled and guarded around, that he is safe from all danger of perishing. Oh, what great promises the Holy Scriptures make to those who trust in God! Are we lost through our sins? Behold the remedy at hand! Let us go with confidence, says the Apostle, to the feet of Jesus Christ, and there shall we find pardon.[6] Let us not wait to go to Jesus

[1] "Oratio pie Deo vim infert."—*Scal. gr.* 28.

[2] "Fiat misericordia tua, Domine, super nos, quemadmodum speravimus in te."—*Ps.* xxxii. 22.

[3] "Protector est omnium sperantium in se."—*Ps.* xvii. 31. "Qui salvos facis sperantes in te."—*Ps.* xvi. 7.

[4] "Lætentur omnes qui sperant in te; in æternum exultabant, et habitabis in eis."—*Ps.* v. 12.

[5] "Sperantem autem in Domino misericordia circumdabit."—*Ps.* xxxi. 10.

[6] "Adeamus ergo cum fiducia ad thronum gratiæ, ut misericordiam

Christ until he sits upon his throne of judgment; let us hasten at once, while he sits on his throne of grace.

But, says the sinner, I do not deserve to be heard, if I beg for pardon. But I reply, though he has not deserved, his confidence in the divine mercy will obtain grace for him; for this pardon is not dependent upon his merits, but upon the divine promise to pardon those who repent; and this it is which Jesus Christ says, *Every one that seeketh, receiveth.*[1] The author of a certain incomplete work says, commenting on the words "every one," that they mean every one, whether just or unjust: it is sufficient that they pray with confidence. Let us, then, hear from the lips of Jesus Christ himself how great things are done by confidence: *Whatsoever things ye seek, when ye pray, believe that ye shall receive them, and they shall be given to you.*[2]

Whosoever, then, fears that through infirmity he shall fall again into his old sins, let him trust in God, and he shall not fall; as the prophet assures us, *All that hope in Him shall not fail.*[3] Isaias says that they who hope in the Lord renew their strength.[4] Let us, then, be strong in not wavering in our confidence, because God has promised, as St. Paul says, to protect all who hope in him; and when anything seems especially difficult to overcome, then let us say, *I can do all things through Him that comforteth me.*[5] And who that ever trusted in God was confounded?[6] Yet, let us not go about seeking

consequamur, et gratiam inveniamus in auxilio opportuno."—*Heb.* iv. 16.

[1] "Omnis enim qui petit, accipit."—*Luke*, xi. 10.

[2] "Omnia quæcumque orantes petitis, credite quia accipietis, et evenient vobis."—*Mark*, xi. 24.

[3] "Non delinquent, omnes qui sperant in eo."—*Ps.* xxxiii. 23.

[4] "Qui autem sperant in Domino mutabunt fortitudinem."—*Isa.* xl. 31.

[5] "Omnia possum in eo qui me confortat."—*Phil.* iv. 13.

[6] "Nullus speravit in Domino et confusus est."—*Ecclus.* ii. 11.

some constant sensible confidence, palpable to our feelings; it is enough if we have the will to trust. This is true confidence, the will to trust in God, because he is good, and desirous to help us, and powerful, and can help us, and faithful, and has promised to help us. Above all, let us strengthen ourselves with the promise made by Jesus Christ, *Amen, amen, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you.*[1] Thus let us seek grace from God, through the merits of Jesus Christ, and we shall obtain what we will.

O eternal God! I know that I am poor in all things; I can do nothing, I have nothing, save what comes to me from Thy hands; all I can say to Thee is, Lord, have mercy upon me. My misery is, that to my poverty I have added the sin of having answered Thy graces with the sins I have committed against Thee. But, notwithstanding, I would hope from Thy mercy this twofold blessing: first, that Thou wouldst pardon my sins; and then that Thou wouldst give me perseverance together with Thy holy love, and with grace to pray to Thee constantly to help me even till death. I ask it all of Thee, I hope for it, through the merits of Thy Son Jesus, and the blessed Virgin Mary. O my chief advocate! help me with thy prayers.

In a previous paragraph I mentioned the work of Signor Mattei on the Psalms,—a work worthy of general approbation. But I beg him to permit me to express here my regret at the eulogies that he lavishes upon the poetical compositions of his celebrated friend, Signor Pietro Metastasio. He should have excepted the pieces that treat of profane love, and that merit no praise but blame; for the more beautiful they are, as I said in § 6, the more hurtful they are to youth. He should have frankly avowed that his worthy friend should have made a better use of the talent that God had given him, in employing it in works that would edify the people, not in the composi-

[1] "Amen, amen dico vobis: si quid petieritis Patrem in nomine meo, dabit vobis."—*John*, xvi. 23.

tion of verses that would indeed secure to him the applause of worldlings, but not of good people, and much less of God.

In my writings I have always avoided censuring any one, whoever he might be, even those who have heaped injury upon me; but, under the present circumstances, I do not hesitate to disapprove of the erotic poems of Metastasio; and in this I am fully in accord with him, since at present, as I have mentioned above, he detests with horror, and in an edifying manner, his own works that the world applauds. I know very well that this censure will be blamed by the admirers of Metastasio; but let them reflect that in boasting of his pernicious productions they but displease him who now repents of having composed them, and displease God who wishes that books injurious to souls should not be praised, but should be blamed as they deserve to be, in order to open the eyes of the imprudent youth that read them.

It is true that in the poetry of Metastasio there is nothing immodest, that in it we find none of the obscenities that sully the impious works of Marini and the like; however, we must admit that his expressions are too tender, and are capable of inflaming the heart with impure love. Who does not see in this passionate language the source of grave disorder? This can easily be seen in the pestilential work entitled *Il Pastor fido*, a work justly condemned by the Church, as I have been told; and if it is not condemned, it deserves to be a thousand times. Earthly and carnal love is a fire that leads sooner or later to the fire of hell. Ah! ask the multitude of those wretched people who did not take care to protect themselves from the impure flame that has perverted them, mind and heart at the same time. Signor Mattei ought to thank God for having inspired him with the happy thought of consecrating his fine talent and his acquirements to a work so erudite, so useful, and so pious.

XVIII.

Salvation Alone is Necessary.

One thing is needful.[1] It is not necessary that in this world we should be honored with dignities, favored with riches, with good health, and earthly pleasures; but it is necessary that we should be saved; for there is no middle course,—we must either be saved or be damned.

[1] "Unum est necessarium."—*Luke*, x. 42.

After this short life, we shall be either eternally happy in heaven, or eternally wretched in hell.

O my God! what is it that will befall me? Shall I be saved or be lost? One lot or the other must be mine. I hope to be saved; but who shall assure me of it? I know that I have repeatedly deserved hell. Yes, my Saviour, Thy death is my hope.

How many worldly persons there are who were for a time loaded with riches and honors, and lifted up to high positions, and even to thrones, and who now find themselves in hell, where all their fortune in this world serves only to increase thair pains and despair. This is what the Lord warned us of: *Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth destroy.*[1] Every acquisition of earthly goods perishes with death; but the acquisition of spiritual goods is an unrivalled treasure, and is eternal.

God has taught us that he wills the salvation of all.[2] And to all he gives the power of being saved. Miserable he who is lost; it is all his own deed: *Thou art thy destruction, O Israel; in Me alone is thy help.*[3] And this will be the greatest pain of the damned, the thought that they were lost through their own fault. Fire and the worm (that is, the remorse of conscience) will be the torturers of the damned, in punishment for their sins;[4] but the worm will torment them forever more terribly than the flame. How much pain we suffer in this world from the loss of any object of value,—a diamond, a clock,

[1] "Nolite thesaurizare vobis thesauros in terra . . . thesaurizate autem vobis thesauros in cœlo, ubi neque ærugo, neque tinea demolitur."—*Matt.* vi. 19.

[2] "Omnes homines vult salvos fieri."—1 *Tim.* ii. 4.

[3] "Perditio tua, Israel; tantummodo in me auxilium tuum."—*Osee*, xiii. 9.

[4] "Vindicta carnis impii, ignis et vermis."—*Ecclus.* vii. 19.

a purse of money,—when it happens through our own carelessness! We cannot eat or sleep, for thinking of our loss, so long as there is a hope of repairing it in some other way. What, then, will be the torment of one who is lost, in that, through his own fault, he has lost God and paradise, without a hope of ever recovering them!

We have gone astray.[1] This will be the eternal complaint of the miserable damned ones: we have gone astray, destroying ourselves of our own accord, and there is no remedy for our error. In all the misfortunes that occur to most persons in this life, a remedy comes with time, or with a change of state, or, at least, through a holy resignation to the will of God. But none of these remedies will be for us when we have reached eternity, if we have wandered from the path to heaven.

Therefore, the Apostle St. Paul exhorts us to labor for eternal salvation with a continual fear of losing it: *Work out your salvation with fear and trembling.*[2] This fear will cause us to walk in it with caution, and to avoid occasions of evil; it will aid us continually to recommend ourselves to God, and thus we shall be saved. Let us pray the Lord that he will fix this thought in our hearts, that upon that last opening of the lips, which will be our act before death, depends the question whether we shall be eternally blessed, or eternally miserable, without hope of remedy.

My God, many times have I despised Thy grace; I deserve no mercy; but Thy prophet teaches me that Thou showest mercy to all who seek Thee.[3] For the past I have fled from Thee; but now I seek nothing, I

[1] "Ergo erravimus."—*Wis.* v. 6.

[2] "Cum metu et tremore vestram salutem operamini."—*Phil.* ii. 12.

[3] "Bonus est Dominus sperantibus in eum, animæ quærenti illum."—*Lam.* iii. 25.

ask nothing, I love nothing, but Thee. In Thy goodness, despise me not; remember the blood Thou hast shed for me. This blood, and thy intercession, O Mary, Mother of God! are my only hope.

XIX.

Perfect Resignation to the Divine Will.

My meat is to do his will.[1] So said Jesus Christ, speaking of himself. In this mortal life, *meat* is that which preserves our life; and, therefore, our Lord said that it was his meat to do the will of the Father. This also ought to be the meat of our souls: *Life is in his will.*[2] Our life consists in doing the divine will; he that does not fulfil it is dead.

The wise man writes: *They that are faithful in love shall rest in him.*[3] They who are little faithful in loving God will desire that he should agree with them, that he should comform himself to their pleasure, and do whatever they desire; but they who love God agree with him, and unite their wills to his will, and are satisfied with everything that God does with them, and with all their circumstances; and in every adversity that afflicts them, whether sickness, dishonor, weariness, loss of property or of kindred, they ever have on their lips and in their heart these words, "Thy will be done," which are the constant expression of saints.

God only desires that which is best for us, which is our sanctification.[4] Let us take care, therefore, to quiet our own will, uniting it ever to the will of God; and

[1] "Meus cibus est, ut faciam voluntatem ejus qui misit me."—*John*, iv. 34.

[2] "Et vita in voluntate ejus."—*Ps.* xxix. 6.

[3] "Fideles in dilectione acquiescent illi."—*Wis.* iii. 9.

[4] "Hæc est enim voluntas Dei, sanctificatio vestra."—1 *Thess.* iv. 3.

thus we shall be able, also, to quiet our intellect, recollecting that everything that God does is the best thing that can befall us. Whoever does not this will never find true peace. All the perfection that can be attained in this world, which is a place of purification, and consequently a place of pains and troubles, consists in suffering patiently those things that are opposed to our self-love; and, in order to suffer with patience, there is no more efficacious means than a willingness to suffer, in order to do the will of God. *Submit thyself, then, to Him, and be at peace.*[1] He that agrees with the divine will in everything is always at peace, and nothing that happens to him can make him miserable. *It will not make the just man sad, whatever shall befall him.*[2] But why is the just man never miserable under any circumstances? Because he knows well that whatever happens in the world, happens through the will of God.

The divine will (so to say) draws out all the thorns and bitterness of the tribulations that come upon us in this world. The hymn which speaks of the divine will thus sings: "Thou changest crosses into joys; Thou makest even death to be sweet; he that can unite himself to Thee knows neither cross nor fear. Oh, how worthy art Thou of love, O Thou will of God!"

Behold the excellent counsel of St. Peter, in order to find a perfect peace in the midst of the toils of this present life, *Casting all your care upon Him; for He has care for you.*[3] And if it is God who thus gives thought for our good, why should we weary ourselves with so many anxieties, as if our happiness depended on our own cares, and not rather abandon ourselves into the hands of God, upon whom all depends? *Cast thy care*

[1] "Acquiesce ergo ei, et habeto pacem."—*Job*, xxii. 21.

[2] "Non contristabit justum, quidquid ei acciderit."—*Prov.* xii. 21.

[3] "Omnem sollicitudinem vestram projicientes in eum, quoniam ipsi cura est de vobis."—1 *Peter*, v. 7.

upon the Lord, says David, *and He shall nourish thee.*[1] Let us strive to obey God in everything he commands us and advises us, and then let us leave to him the care of our salvation, and he will take care to give us all the means that are necessary, in order that we may be saved: *Thy soul shall be saved, because thou hast had confidence in Me.*[2] Whosoever places his whole confidence in God is sure of eternal salvation.

In a word, whoever does the will of God enters into paradise; and he that does it not, enters not. Some people trust their eternal salvation to certain devotions, or to certain outward works of piety, and yet do not the will of God. But Jesus Christ says: *Not every one that saith to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.*[3]

Thus, if we desire to be saved, and to acquire a perfect union with God, let us take care to be ever offering up the prayer of David: *Teach me, O Lord, to do Thy will.*[4] And for this purpose, let us strip ourselves of our own will, and give it wholly to God, without reserve. When we give to God our property in alms, our food in fastings, our blood in scourgings, we give him what we possess; but when we give him our will, we give him altogether ourselves; wherefore he that gives to God all his will is able to say, Lord, having given Thee all my will, I have nothing more to give Thee. The sacrifice of our own will is the most acceptable sacrifice we can make to God; and God pours fourth his graces abundantly upon him who makes it.

[1] "Jacta super Dominum curam tuam, et ipse te enutriet."—*Ps.* liv. 23.

[2] "Erit tibi anima tua in salutem, quia in me habuisti fiduciam."—*Jer.* xxxix. 18.

[3] "Non omnis qui dicit mihi: Domine! Domine!—intrabit in regnum cœlorum; sed qui facit voluntatem Patris mei."—*Matt.* vii. 21.

[4] "Doce me facere voluntatem tuam."—*Ps.* cxlii. 10.

This sacrifice, however, in order to be perfect, must have two conditions: it must be *without reserve*, and it must be *constant*. Some persons give to God their will, but with a certain reserve; and little does this gift please God. Others give him their will, but speedily they take it back again; and such persons place themselves in great peril of being abandoned by God; so that it is necessary that all our strength, and desires, and prayers, should be directed to obtain from God perseverance in doing nothing but what he wills. Let us, then, day by day, renew to God our total renunciation of our own will, and constantly take care to seek and ask for nothing which is not according to the will of God. And thus will cease within us passions, desires, fears, and all inordinate affections. Sister Margaret of the Cross, a daughter of the Emperor Maximilian, and a Bare-footed Nun of St. Clare, when she became quite blind, was wont to say, "How can I desire to see, when God wills it not?"

Receive, O God of my soul! receive the sacrifice of my whole will and my whole liberty. I see that I have deserved that Thou shouldst turn Thy back upon me, and refuse this gift of mine, so often have I been unfaithful to Thee; but I learn that Thou dost again command me to love Thee with all my heart, and, therefore, I am sure Thou wilt receive it. I resign myself, then, wholly to Thy will; make me to know what Thou wilt, that I may be able to accomplish it all. Make me love Thee, and then dispose of me and all my affairs as it pleases Thee. I am in Thy hands; do what Thou knowest to be most expedient for my eternal salvation; while I declare that I desire Thee alone, and nothing more.

O mother of God! do thou obtain for me the gift of holy perseverance.

XX.

Happy is He who is Faithful to God in Adversity.

The faithfulness of soldiers is tried, not in repose, but in battle. This earth is our battle-field, where every one is placed to fight, and to conquer, in order to be saved: if he conquers not, he is lost forever. Therefore said holy Job, *Every day I now fight; I wait until my change cometh.*[1] Job suffered in struggling with many a foe, but he comforted himself with the hope that, in conquering and rising from the dead, he should change all his state. Of this change St. Paul spoke, and rejoiced in speaking of it: *The dead shall be raised incorrupt, and we shall be changed.*[2] Our estate is changed in heaven, which is no place of toil, but of rest; not of fear, but of security; not of sorrow or weariness, but of gladness and joy eternal. With the hope, then, of so great joy, let us inspire ourselves, and fight until death, and never give ourselves up conquered to our enemies *until our change comes;*[3] until the end of our struggle is attained, and we possess a blessed eternity.

"The patient man will endure for the time, and then shall gladness be restored to him." Blessed is he who suffers for God in this life; he suffers "for the time," but his joy will be eternal in the country of the blessed. This will end the persecutions, the temptations, the infirmities, the annoyances, and all the miseries of this life; and God will give us a life full of satisfaction, which will never end. Now is the time for pruning the vine, and for cutting off everything that hinders its

[1] "Cunctis diebus quibus nunc milito, expecto donec veniat immutatio mea."—*Job*, xiv. 14.

[2] "Et mortui resurgent incorrupti, et nos immutabimur."—1 *Cor.* xv. 52.

[3] Donec veniat immutatio nostra.

growth towards the promised land of heaven. But the cutting off produces pain, so that we have need of patience; and then is the restoration of gladness, when the more we have suffered, the more shall we be filled with consolations. God is faithful; and to him who suffers on earth for his love's sake, with resignation, he promises that he himself will be his reward; a reward infinitely greater than all our sufferings: *Behold, I am thy exceeding great reward.*[1]

Nevertheless, before we receive the crown of eternal life, the Lord wills that we should be tried with sufferings. *Blessed is the man that suffereth temptation; for, when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which God hath promised to them that love Him.*[2] Blessed, then, is he who is faithful to God in adversity. Some people think they are beloved of God when all their affairs go prosperously, and they have no troubles; but they complain because God does not try the patience and faithfulness of his servants by prosperity, but by adversity, in order to give them that crown which fadeth not away, as all the crowns of this life do fade away. This will be a crown of eternal glory, as St. Peter writes: *Ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.*[3] To whom, then, is this crown promised? St. James says, *God has promised it to those who love Him.*[4] God has promised it again and again to those who love him, because divine love makes us fight with courage and win the victory.

To the love of God we must also join humility. The Preacher says, *Gold and silver are tried in the fire, but ac-*

[1] "Ego . . . merces tua magna nimis."—*Gen.* xv. 1.

[2] "Beatus vir qui suffert tentationem, quoniam, cum probatus fuerit, accipiet coronam vitæ, quam repromisit Deus diligentibus se."—*James*, i. 12.

[3] "Percipietis immarcessibilem gloriæ coronam."—1 *Peter*, v. 4.

[4] Quam repromisit Deus diligentibus se.

ceptable men in the furnace of humiliation.[1] It is in humiliation that saints are discovered, in which it is made known whether they are gold or lead. Such a one has been counted a saint; but when he receives an injury from another, he is all in an agitation; he complains of it to every one; he say he will make him repent of it. This is a sign of what he is; it is a sign that he is lead. The Lord said, *In thy humility have patience.*[2] The proud man, whatever humiliation he receives, considers it a great injustice, and, therefore, cannot endure it; but the humble man, accounting himself deserving of every evil treatment, suffers all with patience. Let him who has committed a mortal sin cast a glance upon the hell that he has deserved, and thus he will suffer with patience every contempt and every pain.

Let us, then, love God, and be humble; and whatever we do, let us do it, not to please ourselves, but only to please God. O cursed self-love! which intrudes itself in all our works. Even in our spiritual exercises, in meditation, in works of penance, and in all our pious works, it goes about seeking its own interests. Few are the devout souls who do not fall into this defect: *Who shall find a valiant woman? Far, and from the uttermost coasts, is the price of her.*[3] Where shall we find a soul so brave that, despoiled of every passion, and of every love for its own interests, goes on to love Jesus Christ in the midst of slights, pains, desolations of spirit, and wearinesses of life? Solomon said that these are gems of great price; they come from the last ends of the world, and therefore are most rare.

O my crucified Jesus! I am one who, even in my de-

[1] "In igne probatur aurum et argentum; homines vero receptibiles in camino humiliationis."—*Ecclus.* ii. 5.

[2] "In humilitate tua patientiam habe."—*Ibid.* 4.

[3] "Mulierem fortem quis inveniet? Procul et de ultimis finibus pretium ejus."—*Prov.* xxxi. 10.

votions, have gone about seeking my own pleasure, and my own satisfaction; all unlike to Thee, who, through love of me, hast passed a life of trouble, deprived of every alleviation. Give me Thy help, that henceforth I may seek only Thy pleasure and Thy glory. I would love Thee without any other reward; but I am weak, Thou must give me the strength to accomplish it. Behold me; I am Thine; dispose of me as it pleases Thee; make me love Thee, and I ask for nothing more, O Mary, my Mother! obtain for me faithfulness to God, through thy intercession.

XXI.

He that Loves Jesus Christ ought to Hate the World.

Whosoever loves Jesus Christ with true love, let him greatly rejoice when he sees himself treated by the world as Jesus Christ was treated, who was hated, scorned, and persecuted by the world, even to an agonizing death upon a shameful cross. The world is all against Jesus Christ; and therefore, hating Jesus Christ, it hates all his servants. Therefore the Lord encouraged his disciples to suffer in peace all the persecutions of the world, saying to them that, having given up the world, they could not but be hated by the world. *Ye are not of the world, therefore the world hateth you.*[1]

And as the lovers of God are hateful to the world, thus the world ought to be hateful to him who loves God. St. Paul said, *God forbid that I should glory, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me.*[2] The Apostle was an odious thing to the world, as a man condemned and dead upon a cross

[1] "De mundo non estis . . . propterea odit vos mundus."—*John*, xv. 19.

[2] "Mihi absit gloriari, nisi in cruce Domini nostri Jesu Christi, per quem mihi mundus crucifixus est, et ego mundo."—*Gal.* vi. 14.

is odious; and thus, in return, the world was odious to St. Paul: *The world is crucified unto me.*

Jesus Christ chose to die upon the cross for our sins, for this end, that he might deliver us from this evil world.[1] Our Lord, having called us to the love of him, desires that we should become superior to the promises and threats of the world. He desires that we should no longer take account of its censures or its praises. We must pray God to make us utterly forget the world, and to make us rejoice when we see the world reject us. It is not enough, in order to belong wholly to God, that we should abandon the world; we must desire that the world should abandon us, and utterly condemn us. Some people leave the world, but they do not cease to wish to be praised by it, at least for having abandoned it; in such persons the desire of worldly estimation causes the world still to live in them.

Thus, then, the world hates the servants of God, and therefore it hates their good examples and holy maxims; and therefore it is necessary that we should hate all the maxims of the world. *The wisdom of the flesh is an enemy to God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither can it be.*[2] The Apostle says *it cannot be*, for this reason, that the world has no other object but its own interest or pleasure; and thus it cannot agree with those who seek only to please God.

Yea, O Jesus! who wast crucified, and died for me, Thee alone I desire to please. What is the world, what are riches, what are honors? I desire that Thou, my Redeemer, shouldst be all my treasure; to love Thee *is* my riches. If Thou wilt have me poor, I desire to be poor; if Thou wilt have me humbled and despised by

[1] "Dedit semetipsum pro peccatis nostris, ut eriperet nos de præsenti sæculo nequam."—*Gal.* i. 4.

[2] "Sapientia carnis inimica est Deo; legi enim Dei non est subjecta, nec enim potest."—*Rom.* viii. 7.

all, I embrace all, and receive it from Thy hands; Thy will shall ever be my comforter. This is the grace that I seek of Thee, that in every event I may not depart a moment from Thy holy will.

XXII.

The Words of a Dying Man to Jesus Crucified.

O Jesus, my Redeemer! who within a few moments wilt be my judge, have mercy upon me before the moment comes when Thou wilt judge me. No, my sins do not terrify me, nor the rigors of Thy judgment, while I see Thee dead upon this cross to save me.

Yet, cease not to comfort me in the agony to which I am come: my enemies would terrify me by saying that there is no salvation for me: *Many say unto my soul, there is no salvation for him in his God.*[1] But I will never cease to trust in Thy goodness, and say, *Thou, O Lord! art my lifter up.*[2] Do Thou comfort me; do Thou make me feel that Thou art my salvation; *Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.*[3] Oh, let not all those pangs, those insults endured, that blood poured forth by Thee, be lost unto me. "Thou hast redeemed me, dying upon the cross; let not so great labor be in vain." Especially, I pray Thee, through that bitterness Thou didst feel when Thy blessed soul was separated from Thy most holy body, have mercy upon my soul when it departs from my body.

It is true that through my sins I have continually despised Thee; but now I love Thee above everything, I love Thee more than myself; and I grieve with all my heart for all the offences that I have committed against Thee; I detest them, I hate them above every evil. I

[1] "Multi dicunt animæ meæ: Non est salus ipsi in Deo ejus."—*Ps.* iii. 3.

[2] "Tu autem, Domine, susceptor meus es."—*Ps.* iii. 4.

[3] "Dic animæ meæ: Salus tua ego sum."—*Ps.* xxxiv. 3.

see that through the offences I have been guilty of, I have deserved a thousand hells; but the bitter death which Thou hast been willing to endure for me, and the great mercies Thou hast already shown me, make me confidently hope that when I appear before Thee, Thou wilt welcome me with the kiss of peace.

Trusting all in Thy goodness, O my God! I abandon myself into Thy loving arms. *In Thee, O Lord! I have hoped: I shall not be confounded forever.*[1] Through the sins I have committed, I have again and again deserved hell; but I hope in Thy blood, that Thou hast now pardoned me; and I hope that I shall come to heaven to praise Thy mercies forever: *The mercies of God I will sing forever.*[2]

I willingly accept all the pains Thou dost destine for me in purgatory: it is just that the fire should purge away the wrongs I have done Thee. O holy prison, when shall I find myself shut up in thee, secure from being able ever to lose my God! O holy fire, when wilt thou purge away my vileness, and make me worthy to enter the kingdom of the blessed!

O eternal Father! through the merits of the death of Thy Son, Jesus Christ, make me to die in Thy grace, and in Thy love, that I may come to love Thee throughout eternity. I thank Thee for all the graces Thou hast given me through my life, and especially for the great grace of Thy holy faith, and for having caused me to receive, in these my last days, all the holy sacraments. Thou willest that I should die, and I desire to die to please Thee. It is little, O Jesus, my Saviour! that I should die for Thee, who hast died for me. I am satisfied to say to Thee, with St. Francis, "Let me die for love of Thee, who hast vouchsafed to die for love of me."

[1] "In te, Domine, speravi; non confundar in æternum."—*Ps.* xxx. 2.

[2] "Misericordias Domini in æternum cantabo."—*Ps.* lxxxviii. 2.

I receive death with peace, and also the pains that I must endure so long as I breathe; give me strength to suffer with a perfect conformity to Thy will. I offer them all to Thy glory, uniting them to the pains that Thou didst suffer in Thy Passion. O eternal Father! I sacrifice to Thee my life, and all my being; and I pray Thee to accept this my sacrifice, through the merits of the great sacrifice that Jesus Thy Son offered up of himself upon the cross.

O Mother of God, and my Mother Mary! thou hast obtained many graces from God for me during my life; I thank thee with all my heart. Oh, abandon me not in this hour of my death, in which I have greater need of thy prayers. Pray to Jesus for me, and increase thy prayers; obtain for me sorrow for my sins, and more love for God, that I may come to love him forever, in company with Thee, and with all my powers, in heaven. "In thee, O Lady! I have hoped: I shall not be confounded forever." Mary, my hope, in thee I trust.

XXIII.

Acts of Devotion for the Time of Death.

It was revealed to St. Lidwina by an angel that the crown of merits and glory that awaited her in heaven could only be completed through the sufferings which she was to endure in the days which would immediately precede her death. The same thing happens to all devout souls when they depart from this world. It is certain that all good acts, and especially those of resignation in accepting death, performed with the view of pleasing God, are of great merit to every one who dies in the grace of God. Let us here set down certain acts of devotion, which may be very acceptable to the Lord at the time of death.

O my God! I offer Thee my life, and I am prepared to die at any hour that may be pleasing to Thy holy will. "Thy will be done;" ever, ever, may Thy will be done.

O Lord! if Thou willest to leave me in life for some time longer, blessed be Thy name; but I desire not life, except to spend it all in loving Thee and giving Thee pleasure. If Thou wilt that I should die of this sickness, still blessed art Thou. I embrace death to do Thy will, and I repeat, "Thy will, Thy will be done;" I only beg Thee to help all through this hour. "Have mercy on me, O God! according to Thy great mercy." If, then, Thou wilt that I should leave this earth, I declare that I desire to die, because thus Thou wilt have it.

I desire also to die, in order that, by the pain and bitterness of my death, I may satisfy Thy divine justice for all my sins, through which I have offended Thee and deserved hell.

I desire also to die, that I may nevermore offend Thee, or cause Thee displeasure in this life.

I also desire to die in acknowledgment of the gratitude which I owe Thee for all the benefits and gifts that Thou hast given me, contrary to all my own deserts.

I desire to die, that I may show that I love Thy will more than my life.

I desire, if it pleases Thee, to die now, at a time when I trust I am in Thy grace, in order to be assured that I shall praise and bless Thee forever.

I desire, above all, to die, in order that I may come to love Thee eternally, and with all my powers, in heaven; where, through Thy blood, O my Redeemer! I hope to come, and to be sure of never ceasing to love Thee through all eternity. O my Jesus! Thou didst accept the death of the cross through love of me; I accept death, and all the pains that await me, through love of Thee. Therefore I say with St. Francis, "May I die, O Lord! through love of Thee, who, through love of me, didst not disdain to die."[1]

[1] Moriar, Domine, amore amoris tui, qui amore amoris mei dignatus es mori!

I pray Thee, O my Saviour, my love, and my only good! by Thy holy wounds and Thy bitter death, make me to die in Thy grace, and through Thy blood suffer me not to perish. O sweetest Jesus! suffer me not to be separated from Thee.

O Lord! drive me not away from Thy face. I confess that, through my sins, I have deserved hell, and I mourn for them more than for any evil; and I hope to come to heaven to praise forever the great mercies Thou hast shown to me. "The mercies of the Lord I shall sing forever."

I adore Thee, O my God! who hast created me. I believe in Thee, O Eternal Truth! I hope in Thee, O Infinite Mercy! I love Thee, O Supreme Goodness! I love Thee above everything; I love Thee more than myself, for Thou art worthy of being loved. And because I love Thee, I repent with all my heart for having despised Thy grace. I promise Thee to suffer every kind of death, and a thousand deaths, rather than displease Thee.

O Jesus! Son of God, who didst die for me, have pity upon me! My Saviour, save me; and let it be my salvation to praise Thee through eternity.

O Mary, Mother of God! pray to Jesus for me; now it is the time for thee to aid me. Mary, Mother of grace, Mother of mercy, do thou defend us from the enemy, and receive us in the hour of death. To thy protection we fly, O holy Mother of God! O Mary, holy Mother of God! pray for us sinners.

St. Joseph, my patron and father, help me in this hour. St. Michael the Archangel, deliver me from the devils who lie in wait for my soul. O my holy advocates, and ye saints of paradise, pray to God for me.

And Thou, my Jesus crucified, at the moment when I must breathe my last breath, receive my soul in Thy arms; to Thee I recommend it; remember that Thou

hast redeemed me with Thy blood. "We therefore pray Thee, help Thy servants whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy precious blood."[1] O my crucified Jesus! my love and my hope, whether I live or die, I declare that I desire Thee alone, and nothing more. Thou art my God and my all, and what else can I desire but Thee! "What have I in heaven or upon earth! Thou art the God of my heart and my portion forever."[2] Thou art the love of my heart; Thou art all my riches!

To Thee, then, I recommend my soul; to Thee, who hast redeemed it with Thy death. Into Thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit:[3] Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth! Trusting in Thy mercy, I therefore say, In Thee, O Lord! have I hoped; I shall not be confounded forever. O Mary, thou art my hope; to thee, therefore, I say again, In thee, O Lady! have I hoped; I shall not be confounded forever.[4]

XXIV.

The House of Eternity.

A man shall go to the house of his eternity.[5] We err in calling this our habitation in which we now dwell; the habitation of our body in a little while will be a grave, in which it must rest until the day of judgment; and the habitation of the soul will be either paradise or hell, according as it has deserved, and there will it continue through all eternity.

[1] Te ergo quæsumus, tuis famulis subveni, quos pretioso sanguine redemisti.

[2] "Quid mihi est in cœlo? et a te quid volui super terram? . . . Deus cordis mei, et pars mea Deus in æternum."—*Ps.* lxxii. 25.

[3] "In manus tuas commendo spiritum meum; redemisti me, Domine Deus veritatis."—*Ps.* xxx. 6.

[4] "In te, Domine, speravi; non confundar in æternum."—*Ibid.* 2.

[5] "Ibit homo in domum æternitatis suæ."—*Eccles.* xii. 5.

At our burial our corpses do not go to the grave of themselves, they are carried thither by others; but the soul goes itself to the place which awaits it, either of eternal joy or eternal woe. *A man shall go to the house of his eternity.* According as a man lives well or ill, so he departs himself to his habitation, in paradise or in hell, which he shall never change.

Those who live on this earth often change their home, either to please themselves, or because they are compelled. In eternity the habitation is never changed; where we enter the first time, there we abide forever. *If the tree fall to the south or to the north, in whatever place it shall fall, there shall it be.* He that enters into the south, which is heaven, will be ever happy; he that enters the north, which is hell, will be ever miserable.

He, then, who enters heaven, will be always united with God, always in company with the saints, always in the profoundest peace, always abundantly contented; because every blessed soul is filled and satisfied with joy, nor will he ever know the fear of losing it. If fear of losing their happiness could enter among the blessed, they would be no longer blessed; for the mere thought of losing the joy they possess would disturb the peace they enjoy.

On the other hand, whoever enters into hell will be forever far from God; he will ever suffer in the fire of the damned. Let us not think that the pains of hell will be like those of earth, where, through the force of habit, a trouble continually grows less; for, as in paradise, the delights never cause weariness, but seem ever new, as though they were for the first time enjoyed (which is implied by the expression of "the new canticle," which the blessed are ever singing); so, in hell, the pains never grow less through all eternity; long custom will never diminish their torment. The miserable beings who are damned will feel the same anguish

through eternity that they feel the first moment they experience its pangs.

St. Augustine said that he who believes in eternity and is not converted to God, has either lost his sense or his faith. Woe, cries St. Cesarius, woe to sinners who enter eternity without knowing it, through having neglected to think upon it! And then he adds, "But, O double woe! they enter it, and they never come forth." It is a double woe, the first of which will be to fall into that abyss of fire; the second, that he who falls into it will never come out: the door of hell opens only to those who enter, not to those who would depart.

No; the saints did not do too much when they went to hide themselves in caves and deserts, to eat herbs, and to sleep on the ground, in order to save their souls. "They did not do too much," says St. Bernard, "because, where eternity is in question, no certainty can be too great." When, then, God visits us with any cross of infirmity, poverty, or any evil, let us think of the hell we have deserved, and thus every sorrow will appear light. Let us say, with Job, *I have sinned, and truly gone astray, and I have not received in accordance with my deserts.*[1] O Lord, I have offended Thee, and many times betrayed Thee, and I have not been punished as I deserved, how, then, can I lament if Thou sendest me any tribulation? I, who have deserved hell!

O my Jesus! send me not to hell, to the hell in which I could no longer love Thee, but must hate Thee forever. Deprive me of everything,—of property, health, life; but deprive me not of Thyself. Grant that I may love Thee and praise Thee forever; and then chastise me, and do with me what Thou wilt. O Mother of God! pray to Jesus for me.

[1] "Peccavi, et vere deliqui, et, ut eram dignus, non recepi."—*Job*, xxxiii. 27.

XXV.

Souls Who Love God Desire to Go to See Him in Heaven.

While we are in the body, we are absent from the Lord.[1] Souls that, in this life, love nothing but God are like noble pilgrims, destined, according to their present state, to be the eternal bride of the King of heaven, but who now live far away without seeing him; wherefore they do nothing but sigh to depart to the country of the blessed, where they know that their Spouse awaits them.

They know, indeed, that their Beloved is ever present with them, but that he is, as it were, hidden by a veil, and does not show himself. Or, to speak more correctly, he is like the sun behind clouds, which, from time to time, sends forth some ray of its splendor, but displays not itself openly. These beloved brides have a bandage before their eyes, which prevents them from seeing him whom they love. They live, nevertheless, contented, uniting themselves to the will of the Lord, who chooses to keep them in exile, and far away from himself; but with all this, they cannot but continually sigh to know him face to face, in order to be more inflamed with love towards him.

Therefore, every one of them often sweetly laments with their beloved Spouse, because he shows himself not; and they say, "O Thou only love of my heart, since Thou hast so loved me, and hast stricken me with Thy holy love, why hidest Thou Thyself, and makest me not to see Thee? I know that Thou art an infinite beauty, I love Thee more than myself, though I have never yet beheld Thee; open to me Thy fair countenance; I would know Thee all revealed, in order that I may no more look to myself nor to any creature, and may think only of loving Thee, my highest good."

[1] "Dum sumus in corpore, peregrinamur a Domino."—2 *Cor.* v. 6.

When to these souls thus filled with love for God there appears any ray of the divine goodness, and of the love which God bears them, they would be dissolved and fade away for desire of him; and though for them the sun is still hidden behind the clouds, and his fair face is covered by a veil, and their own eyes are bandaged, so that they cannot gaze on him face to face; yet what shall be their joy when the clouds disperse, and the gate opens, and the bandage is taken from their eyes, and the fair countenance of their Beloved appears without a veil, so that in the clear light of day they look upon his beauty, his goodness, his greatness, and the love which he bears to them!

O death, why dost thou so delay to come? If thou comest not, I cannot depart to behold my God. It is thou that must open to me the gate, that I may enter into the palace of my Lord. O blessed country, when will the day be here when I shall find myself beneath thy eternal tabernacles? O beloved of my soul, my Jesus, my treasure, my love, my all! when will that happy moment come, when, leaving this earth, I shall see myself all united with Thee? I deserve not this happiness; but the love which Thou hast shown me, and, still more, Thy infinite goodness, make me hope that I shall be one day joined to those happy souls, who, being wholly united with Thee, love Thee, and will love Thee with a perfect love through all eternity. O my Jesus! Thou seest the alternative in which I am placed, of being either ever united with Thee, or ever far from Thee; have mercy upon me; Thy blood is my hope; and thy intercession, O my Mother Mary! is my comfort and my joy.

XXVI.

Jesus is the Good Shepherd.

Thus spoke he himself: *I am the good Shepherd.*[1] The work of a good shepherd is nothing but this, to guide his flock to good pastures, and to guard them from wolves; but what shepherd, O sweet Redeemer! ever had the mercy, like Thee, to give his life to save his flocks, which flocks are we, to deliver them from the punishment they had deserved?

He Himself hath borne our sins in His own body on the tree, that, being dead to sin, we should live to justice; by whose stripes we were healed.[2] To heal us of our sicknesses this good Shepherd took upon himself all our debts, and paid them with his own body, dying with agony upon a cross. It was this excess of love towards us, his sheep, which made St. Ignatius the martyr burn with desire to give his life for Jesus Christ, saying, "My Love is crucified;"[3] as he wrote in his letter, saying, "What! has my God been willing to die on a cross for me, and cannot I desire to die for him?" And, in truth, was it a great thing the martyrs did in giving their lives for Jesus Christ, when he died for love of them? Oh, how the death endured for them by Jesus Christ made sweet to them all their torments, stripes, piercing nails, fiery plates of iron, and most tormenting deaths!

But the love of this good Shepherd was not satisfied in giving his life for his sheep; he desires, also, after his death, to leave them his body itself, first sacrificed upon the cross, that it might be the food and pasture of their souls. "The burning love which he bore to us," says

[1] "Ego sum Pastor bonus."—*John*, x. 11.

[2] "Peccata nostra ipse pertulit in corpore suo super lignum, ut, peccatis mortui, justitiæ vivamus; cujus livore sanati estis."—1 *Peter* ii. 24.

[3] Amor meus crucifixus est.

John Chrysostom, "induced him to unite himself and make himself one thing with us." [1]

When this good Shepherd sees a sheep lost, what does he not do, what means does he not take, to recover it? and he does not cease to seek it till he finds it. *If he lose one of them, he goeth after that which was lost until he finds it.*[2] And when he has found it, rejoicingly he places it upon his shoulders, that it may be lost no more; and, calling to him his friends and neighbors, i.e., the angels and saints, he invites them to rejoice with him for having found the sheep that was lost. Who, then, will not love with all his affections this good Lord, who shows himself thus loving to sinners who have turned their backs upon him, and destroyed themselves of their own accord?

O my Saviour, worthy of all love, behold at Thy feet a sheep that was lost! I had left Thee, but Thou hast not abandoned me; Thou hast left no means untried to recover me. What would have become of me, if Thou hadst not thought of seeking me? Woe is me! how long a time have I lived far from Thee! Now, through Thy mercy, I trust that I am in Thy grace; and as I first fled from Thee, now I desire nothing but to love Thee, and to live and die embracing Thy feet. But while I live, I am in danger of leaving Thee; oh, bind me, chain me with the bond of Thy holy love, and cease not to seek for me so long as I live on this earth. *I have gone astray like a sheep that was lost; oh, seek Thy servant.*[3] O thou advocate of sinners, obtain for me a holy perseverance.

[1] "Semetipsum nobis immiscuit, ut unum quid simus . . . ardenter enim amantium hoc est."—*Ad pop. Ant. hom.* 61.

[2] "Et si perdiderit unam ex illis . . . vadit ad illam quæ perierat, donec inveniat eam."—*Luke*, xv. 4.

[3] "Erravi sicut ovis quæ periit, quære servum tuum."—*Ps.* cxviii. 176.

XXVII.

The Affair of Eternal Salvation.

The business of our eternal salvation is for us that affair which is not only the most important, but the only thing that ought to trouble us, because, if this goes wrong, all is lost. One thought upon eternity, well weighed, is enough to make a saint. The great servant of God, F. Vincenzo Carafa, was wont to say that if all men thought with a living faith upon the eternity of another life, the world would become a desert, for no one would attend any more to the affairs of this life.

Oh, that all had ever before their eyes the great truth taught us by Jesus Christ! *What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?*[1] This truth has taught many a man to leave the world; many noble virgins, and even those of royal blood, to shut themselves up in a cloister; many anchorites to live in deserts, and many martyrs to give their lives for the faith; because they considered that if they lost their souls, all the good things of the world would profit them nothing in the eternal state.

Therefore the Apostle wrote to his disciples: *We entreat you, brethren, that ye attend to your own business.*[2] And of what business did St. Paul speak? He spoke of that business which, if it fail, implies that we lose the eternal kingdom of Paradise, and are cast into an abyss of torments that never end. It is an affair of eternal punishments, and of the loss of the heavenly kingdom, says St. John Chrysostom.[3]

[1] "Quid enim prodest homini, si mundum universum lucretur, animæ vero suæ detrimentum patiatur?"—*Matt.* xvi. 26.

[2] "Rogamus autem vos, fratres . . . ut negotium vestrum agatis."—1 *Thess.* iv. 10

[3] "De immortalibus supplicüs, de cœlestis regni amissione, res agitur."—*In Matt. hom.* 25.

St. Philip Neri, therefore, had good reason for calling all those persons mad who bestow pains in this life for gaining riches and honors, and give little heed to the salvation of the soul. "All such," said the venerable John Avila, "deserve to be shut up in an asylum for lunatics." How can this be? This great servant of God meant to say, "You believe that there is an eternity of joys for those who love God, and an eternity of pains for those who offend him; and do you offend him?"

Every loss of property, of reputation, of relatives, of health, can be repaired in this life, at least by a good death, and by the acquisition of eternal life, as it happened to the holy martyrs; but for what good things of the world, with fortune even the greatest, can be given the loss of the soul? *What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*[1]

He that dies in the wrath of God, and loses his soul, loses with this every hope of repairing his ruin. *To the wicked, when he is dead, there is no hope more.*[2] O God! if the doctrine of eternal life were but a simple, doubtful opinion of divines, we ought surely to give all our care for gaining a happy eternity, and avoiding a miserable one. But no; it is not a doubtful thing; it is certain, it is of faith, that we must come to one or the other.

But what do we see? Every one who has faith, and thinks upon this truth, says, "So it is we must attend to the salvation of the soul;" but few are they who truly give heed to it. They devote themselves with all their energies to win this cause, or to obtain this situation, but lay aside the care of eternal salvation. "Truly, it is the greatest of errors to neglect the business of eternal salvation,"[3] said St. Eucherius; it is an error that exceeds

[1] "Quam dabit homo commutationem pro anima sua?"—*Matt.* xvi. 26.

[2] "Mortuo homine impio, non erit ultra spes."—*Prov.* xi. 7.

[3] "Sane supra omnem errorem est dissimulare negotium salutis suæ."—*De Contemptu m.*

all others; for to lose the soul is a mistake without a remedy.

Oh, that they would be wise, and would understand, and consider the last things! Miserable are those learned men who labor at many things, and know not how to take forethought for their souls, that they may obtain a favorable sentence in the day of judgment!

O my Redeemer! Thou hast given Thy blood to purchase my soul, and I have so often lost it, and given it to destruction! I give Thee thanks that Thou hast given me time to recover it, by recovering Thy grace. O my God! would that I had died before I had offended Thee! It comforts me to know that Thou knowest not how to despise a heart that humbles itself and repents of its sins. O Mary, refuge of sinners! help me a sinner, who recommends himself to thee, and trusts in thee.

XXVIII.

What will be the Joy of the Blessed.

Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.[1] When the soul enters the kingdom of the blessed, and the barrier which hinders its sight is taken away, it will see openly and without a veil the infinite beauty of God; and this will be the joy of the blessed.

Every object that the soul then will see in God himself will overwhelm it with delight; it will see the rectitude of his judgments, the harmony of his regulations for every soul, all ordained to his divine glory, and its own good.

The soul will especially perceive, in respect to itself, the boundless love which God has entertained towards it in becoming man, and sacrificing his life upon the cross through love of it. Then will it know what an excess of goodness is comprehended in the mystery of the

[1] "Intra in gaudium Domini tui."—*Matt.* xxv. 21.

cross, in the sight of a God become a servant, and dying condemned upon an infamous tree; and in the mystery of the Eucharist, in the sight of a God beneath the species of bread, and made the food of his creatures.

In particular the soul will perceive all the graces and favors shown to it, which, until then, had been hidden. It will see all the mercies he has bestowed on it, in waiting for it, and pardoning its ingratitude. It will see the many calls, and lights, and aids that have been granted to it in abundance. It will see that these tribulations, these infirmities, these losses of property or of kindred, which it counted punishments, were not really punishments, but loving arrangements of God for drawing it to the perfect love for him.

In a word, all these things will make the soul know the infinite goodness of its God, and the boundless love which he deserves; whence, so soon as it has reached heaven, it will have no other desire but to behold him in his blessedness and content; and, at the same time, comprehending that the happiness of God is supreme, infinite, and eternal, it will experience a joy that is only not infinite because a creature is not capable of anything that is infinite. It will enjoy, nevertheless, a pleasure that is extreme and full, which fills it with delight, and with that kind of delight that belongs to God himself; and thus will be fulfilled in it the words, *Enter thou into the joy of Thy Lord.*[1]

The blessed are not so much blessed through the delight which they experience in themselves as in the joy with which God rejoices; for the blessed love God so infinitely more than themselves that the blessedness of God delights them infinitely more than their own blessedness, through the love which they bear to him; which love makes them forget themselves, and all their delight is to please their Beloved.

[1] Intra in gaudium Domini tui.

And this is that holy and loving inebriation which causes the blessed to lose the memory of themselves, to give themselves wholly to praise and love the dear object of all their love, which is God. *They shall be inebriated with the fulness of Thy house.*[1] Happy from their first entrance into heaven, they continue, as it were, lost, and, so to say, swallowed up in love, in that boundless ocean of the goodness of God.

Wherefore every blessed soul will lose all its desires, and will have no other desire but to love God, and to be loved by him; and knowing that it is sure of ever loving him, and of being ever loved by him, this very thing will be its blessedness, which will fill it with joy, and will make it throughout eternity so satisfied with delight that it will desire nothing more.

In a word, it will be the paradise of the blessed, to rejoice in the joy of God. And thus, he who in this life rejoices in the blessedness that God enjoys, and will enjoy through eternity, can say that even in this life he enters into the joy of God, and begins to enjoy Paradise.

Yet, O my sweet Saviour, and the love of my soul! in this vale of tears I still see myself surrounded by enemies, who would separate me from Thee. O my beloved Lord! suffer me not to perish; make me ever love Thee in this life and in the next life, and then do with me what Thou wilt. O Queen of Paradise! if thou prayest for me, assuredly I shall be with thee eternally, to be in thy company, and to praise thee in Paradise.

XXIX.

The Pain of having Lost God will be that which Constitutes Hell.

The weight of punishment must correspond to the weight of the sin. Mortal sin is defined by theologians

[1] "Inebriabuntur ab ubertate domus tuæ, et torrente voluptatis tuæ potabis eos."—*Ps.* xxxv. 9.

in a single phrase, "a turning away from God;"[1] and in this consists the wickedness of mortal sin; it consists in despising the divine grace, and in being willing, of one's own accord, to lose God, who is the greatest good; wherefore justly the greatest punishment of sinners in hell is the punishment of having lost God.

The other pains of hell are terrible: the fire which devours; the gloom which darkens; the cries of the damned which deafen; the stench, which would be enough to cause those miserable beings to die, if die they could; the closeness which oppresses and hinders their breath; but these pains are nothing in comparison with the loss of God. In hell the reprobate wail eternally; and the bitterest subject of their wailing is the thought that, through their own fault, they have lost God.

O God! what a blessing will they have lost! In this life of present objects, passions, temporal occupations, sensible pleasures and adverse events hinder us from contemplating the infinite beauty and goodness of God; but when the soul has departed from the prison-house of the body, it does not instantly behold God as he is; for, if it saw him, it would be instantly blessed; but it knows that God is an infinite good, and worthy of infinite love; whence the soul, which is created to see and love this God, would instantly go to unite itself to God; but if it were in sin, it would find an impenetrable wall (which is sin), that would forever close up the path which leads to God. O Lord! I thank Thee that this life is not yet closed to me, as I have deserved. I still can come to Thee; cast me not away from Thy face!

The soul that is created to love its Creator, by natural love cannot find itself impelled to love its ultimate end, which is God; in this life, the darkness of sin, and earthly affections, lull to sleep this inclination which it has to unite itself to God, and therefore it is not greatly

[1] Aversio a Deo.

afflicted at being separated; but when it leaves the body, and is delivered from the senses, then it comprehends with a clear knowledge that God only can give it content. Hence, so soon as it is separated from the body, immediately it flees to embrace its greatest good; but finding itself in sin, it perceives that, as an enemy, it is driven from God But though driven away, it will not cease to feel itself ever drawn to unite itself to God; and this will be its hell, to find itself ever drawn towards God, and ever driven away from God.

But it would be said that the miserable soul, if it has lost God, and can no more see him, can at least comfort itself in loving him. But this is not so; for being abandoned by grace, and made a slave to sin, its will is perverted; so that, on one side, it finds itself ever drawn to love God, and, on the other, compelled to hate him. Thus, at the same time that it knows that God is worthy of infinite love and praise, it hates him and curses him.

Yet perhaps it might, at least in this prison of torments resign itself to the divine will, as holy souls do in purgatory, and bless the hand of this God that justly punishes it. But no; it cannot resign itself, because, to do this, it must be assisted by grace, while grace (as has been said) has abandoned it; whence it cannot unite its will to that of God, because its own will is altogether contrary to the divine will.

Whence it also comes that the wretched soul turns all its hatred upon itself, and thus will live forever, torn by contrary desires. It would fain live, it would fain die. On one part, it would live, in order to hate God, who is the object of its greatest hatred; on the other, it would die, that it might not feel the pain it experiences of having lost him, while it perceives that it cannot die. Thus it will live forever in one continual mortal agony. Let us pray God, through the merits of Jesus Christ, to deliver us from hell; and especially he ought to pray thus,

who, at any time in his life, has lost God through any grievous sin.

O Lord! (let him say) save me, and therefore bind me ever to Thee with Thy holy love; redouble these holy and sweet chains of salvation, which may ever bind me the more to Thee. Miserable that I am, I have despised Thy grace, and deserved to be forever separated from Thee, my greatest good, and to hate Thee forever. I thank Thee for having borne with me when I was at enmity with Thee; what would have become of me, had I then died? But now that Thou hast lengthened my life, grant that it may not be that I may still more displease Thee, but only to love Thee, and to mourn for the offences I have committed against Thee. O my Jesus! from this day forth Thou shalt be my only love, and my only fear will be to offend Thee, and to separate myself from Thee. But if Thou aidest me not, I can do nothing; I hope in Thy blood, that Thou wilt give me help to be all Thine own, O my Redeemer, my love, my all! O Mary, thou great advocate of sinners, help a sinner who recommends himself to thee, and trusts in thee.

If we would be assured of not losing God, let us give ourselves indeed wholly to God. He that does not give himself wholly to God is ever in danger of turning his back upon him, and of losing him; but a soul which resolutely separates itself from everything, and gives itself all to God will no more lose him; because God himself will not allow that a soul that has heartily given itself all unto him should turn its back upon him and perish. Wherefore a great servant of God was wont to say that when we read of the fall of any who had before given tokens of living a holy life, we must consider that such persons had not given themselves all to God.

XXX.

Contempt for the World.

The thought of the vanity of the world, and that all things that the world values are but falsehood and deceit, has made many souls resolve to give themselves wholly to God. *What does it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?*[1] How many young persons has this great maxim of the Gospel brought to leave relatives, country, possessions, honors, and even crowns, to go to shut themselves up in a cloister or desert, there to think of God alone! The day of death is called the day of loss: *The day of loss is at hand.*[2] It is a day of loss, because all the goods that we have gained on earth must be left, on the day of our death. Wherefore St. Ambrose wisely says that we falsely call these good things *our* good things, because we cannot carry them with us into the other world, where we must dwell forever. It is our holy deeds alone that accompany us, and they alone will comfort us in eternity.[3]

All earthly fortunes, the highest dignities, gold, silver, the most precious jewels, when contemplated from the bed of death, lose their splendor; the dark shadow of death obscures even sceptres and crowns, and makes us see that whatever the world values is but smoke, dust, vanity, and misery. And, in truth, at the time of death, what profit is there in all the riches acquired by the dying person, if nothing belongs to him after death, except a box of wood, in which he is placed to grow corrupt? For what will vaunted beauty of body serve,

[1] "Quid enim prodest homini, si mundum universum lucretur, animæ vero suæ detrimentum patiatur?"—*Matt.* xvi. 26.

[2] "Dies perditionis."—*Deut.* xxxii. 35.

[3] "Non nostra sunt quæ non possumus auferre nobiscum; sola virtus comes est defunctorum."—*In Luke, l.* 7.

when there remains of it only a little polluted dust and four fleshless limbs?

What is the life of man upon earth? Behold it, as described by St. James: *What is your life? It is a smoke which appeareth for a little while, and then will pass away.*[1] To-day this great man is esteemed, feared, praised; to-morrow he is despised, contemned, and abused. *I saw the wicked lifted on high; I went by, and behold he was gone.*[2] He is no longer to be found in this his beloved house, in this great palace which he built; and where is he? he is become dust in the grave!

A false balance is in his hand.[3] In these words the Holy Spirit advises us not to be deceived by the world, because the world weighs its goods in a false balance; we ought to weigh them in the true balance of faith, which will show us what are the true goods of which it can never be said that they speedily finish. St. Teresa said we should not take account of anything that ends with death. O God! what greatness ever remained to these so many first ministers of state, commanders of armies, princes, Roman emperors, now that the scene is changed, and they find themselves in eternity! *Their memory has perished with a sound.*[4] They made a great figure in the world, and their names resounded among all; but when they were dead, for them was changed rank, name, and everything. It is useful here to notice an inscription placed over a certain cemetery in which many gentlemen and ladies are buried: "See where end all greatness, all earthly pomp, all beauty. Worms, dust, a worthless stone, a little sand, close the brief scene at the end of all."

[1] "Quæ est enim vita vestra? Vapor est ad modicum parens, et deinceps exterminabitur."—*James*, iv. 15.

[2] "Vidi impium superexaltatum . . . et transivi, et ecce non erat."—*Ps.* xxxvi. 35.

[3] "In manu ejus statera dolosa."—*Osee*, xii. 7.

[4] "Periit memoria eorum cum sonitu."—*Ps.* ix. 7.

The form of this world passeth away.[1] Our life is but a scene that passes away and speedily ends; and it must end for all, whether nobles or commoners, kings or subjects, rich or poor. Happy he who, in this scene, has played his part well before God. Philip III., King of Spain, died a young man, at the age of forty-two years; and before he died he said to those who stood by, "When I am dead proclaim the spectacle that you now see; proclaim that, in death, to have been a king, serves only to make one feel the pain of having reigned." And then he ended with a sigh, saying, "Oh that during this time I had been in a desert, becoming a saint, that now I might appear with more confidence before the tribunal of Jesus Christ!"

We know the change of life of St. Francis Borgia at the sight of the corpse of the Empress Isabella, who, in life, was most beautiful, but, after death, struck horror into all who saw her. Borgia, when he saw her, exclaimed, "Thus, then, end the good things of this world!" and he gave himself wholly to God. Oh that we could all imitate him before death comes upon us! But let us haste, because death runs towards us, and we know not when it will arrive. Let us not so act that the light that God will then give us will cause nothing but remorse, when we hold in our hands the candle of death. Let us resolve to do now what we shall then wish to have done, and shall not be able to do.

No, my God, it is enough that Thou hast hitherto borne with me; I do not wish that Thou shouldst wait longer to see me give myself wholly to Thee. Thou hast called me many times to have done with this world, and to give myself all to Thy love. Now Thou turnest to me to call unto Thee; behold me, receive me into Thy arms, while at this moment I abandon myself wholly to Thee. O Spotless Lamb, who at Calvary was sacrificed

[1] "Præteriit enim figura hujus mundi."—1 *Cor.* vii. 31.

on a cross for me, wash me first with Thy blood, and pardon all the injuries that Thou hast received from me; and then inflame me with Thy holy love. I love Thee above everything; I love Thee with all my heart. And what object can I find in the world more worthy of love than Thou art, and which has loved me more? O Mary, Mother of God, and my advocate! pray for me; obtain for me a true and lasting change of life. In thee I trust.

XXXI.

Love of Solitude.

God does not allow himself to be found in the tumult of the world; therefore the saints have been wont to seek him in the most rugged deserts, in the most hidden caves, in order that they might converse with God alone. St. Hilarion made trial of several deserts, going from one to another, ever seeking the most solitary, where no man could communicate with him; and, in the end, he died in a desert in Cyprus, after having lived there for five years. St. Bruno, when he was called by the Lord to leave the world, went, with his companions, who wished to follow him, to find St. Hugh, Bishop of Grenoble, that he might assign them some desert place in his diocese. St. Hugh assigned them the *Certosa*, which, from its wildness, was more fitted to be a covert for wild beasts than a habitation for men; and there they went with joy to dwell, placing themselves each in so many little huts, each distant from the rest.

The Lord said once to St. Teresa, "I would willingly speak to many souls, but the world makes so much noise in their hearts that they cannot hear my voice." God does not speak to us in the midst of the rumors and affairs of the world, knowing that if he were to speak he would not be understood. The words of God are his holy inspirations, his lights and calls, through which the

saints are enlightened and inflamed with divine love; but they who do not love solitude will be unable to hear these voices of God.

God himself says, *I will lead her into solitude and speak to her heart.* When God desires to raise any soul to a high degree of perfection, he inspires it to retire to some solitary place, far from the converse of creatures, and there he speaks to the ears, not of the body, but of the heart; and thus he enlightens and inflames it with his divine love.

St. Bernard[1] said that he had learned much more of the love of God, in the midst of the oaks and beeches of the forest, than from books and from the servants of God. Therefore St. Jerome left the pleasures of Rome, and shut himself up in the cave of Bethlehem, and then exclaimed, "O solitude, in which God speaks and communes familiarly with his people!"[2] In solitude God converses familiarly with his beloved souls, and there he makes them hear those words that melt their hearts with holy love, as the sacred Spouse said, *My heart melted when my Beloved spoke.*[3]

We see by experience that conversing with the world, and occupying ourselves in the acquisition of earthly goods, make us forget God; but in the hour of death what do we find from all the toils and time we have spent upon things of the earth, except pains and remorse of conscience? In death we only find comfort from that little which we have done and suffered for God. Why, then, do we not separate ourselves from the world, before death separates it from us?

He shall sit solitary, and hold his peace, because he hath

[1] *Epist.* 106.

[2] O solitudo, in qua Deus cum suis familiariter loquitur et conversatur!

[3] "Anima mea liquefacta est, ut locutus est."—*Cant.* v. 6.

taken it upon himself.[1] The solitary is not moved as he was formerly in worldly affairs; he will sit in repose; and he will hold his peace, and will not call for sensual delights to satisfy him, for he is lifted up above himself, and above all created things; in God he will find every good, and all his content.

Who will give me the wings of a dove, that I may fly away, and be at rest?[2] David desired to have the wings of a dove, that he might leave this earth, and not touch it even with his feet, and thus give rest to his soul. But while we are in this life, it is not given to us to leave this earth. We must, however, take care to love retirement, so far as it is practicable, conversing alone with God; and thus gaining strength for avoiding those defects that arise from our being obliged to have intercourse with the world; as David said, at the very time he was ruling his kingdom, *Behold, I have fled far away, and abode in the wilderness.*[3]

Oh that I had ever thought upon Thee, O God of my soul, and not of the goods of this world! I curse those days in which I went about seeking earthly pleasures, and offended Thee, my greatest good. Oh that I had ever loved Thee! Oh that I had died, and not caused Thee displeasure! Miserable that I am, death draws near, while I find myself still attached to the world! No, my Jesus, from this day I resolve to leave all, and to be wholly Thine. Thou art almighty; Thou must give me strength to be faithful to Thee. O thou Mother of God, pray to Jesus for me!

[1] "Sedebit solitarius, et tacebit, quia levavit super se."—*Lam.* iii. 28.

[2] "Quis dabit mihi pennas sicut columbæ, et volabo, et requiescam?" —*Ps.* liv. 7.

[3] Ecce elongavi fugiens, et mansi in solitudine.

XXXII.

The Solitude of Heart.

St. Gregory wrote, "What does the solitude of the body profit if the solitude of the heart is not there?"[1] In the preceding chapter we have seen how much solitude assists towards a recollectedness of mind; but St. Gregory says that it profits us little or nothing to be with the body in a solitary place, while the heart is full of worldly thoughts and affections. That a soul may be wholly given to God, two things are necessary: the first is, to detach ourselves from the love of every created thing; the second is, to consecrate all our love to God; and this is implied in true solitude of the heart.

We must, then, in the first place, detach our heart from every earthly affection. St. Francis de Sales said: "If I knew that I had a single fibre in my heart which was not given to God, I would instantly pluck it out." If we do not purify and strip the heart of everything earthly, the love of God cannot enter in and possess it all. God would reign with his love in our heart, but he would reign there alone; he will have no companions to rob him of a portion of that affection which he justly claims to have all his own.

Some souls lament that, in all their devout exercises, in meditations, Communions, spiritual readings, visits to the blessed Sacrament, they do not find God, and know not what means to apply themselves to in order to find him. To these St. Teresa suggests the right means when she says, "Detach thy heart from all created things, and seek God, and thou shalt find him."

Many persons, in order to separate themselves from

[1] "Quid prodest solitudo corporis, si solitudo defuerit cordis?"—*Mor.* l. 30, c. 23.

creatures, and to converse with God alone, cannot go to live in deserts, as they would wish; but we must remember that deserts and caves are not necessary in order to enjoy the solitude of the heart. Those who, from necessity, are obliged to converse with the world, whenever their hearts are free from worldly attachments, even in the public streets, in places of resort, and public assemblies, can possess a solitude of heart, and continue united with God. All those occupations which we undertake in order to fulfil the divine will have no power to prevent the solitude of the heart. St. Catharine of Sienna truly found God in the midst of the household labors in which her parents kept her employed in order to draw her from devotional exercises; but in the midst of these affairs she preserved a retirement in her heart, which she called her cell, and there ceased not to converse alone with God.

Be still, and see that I am God.[1] In order to possess that divine light which enables us to know the goodness of God, the knowledge of which draws to itself all the affections of our heart, we must *be empty*, and separate from us the earthly attachments that hinder us from knowing God. As a crystal vase, when it is filled with sand, cannot receive the light of the sun, so a heart which is attached to riches, worldly honors, or sensual pleasures cannot receive the divine light; and, not knowing God, it does not love him. In every condition in which a man is placed by God, in order that creatures may not draw him from God, it is necessary that he give attention to perform his duties according to the pleasure of God, and then in everything else let him act as if there were no other beings in existence except himself and God.

We must detach ourselves from everything, and especially from ourselves, by continually thwarting our

[1] "Vacate, et videte quoniam ego sum Deus."—*Ps.* xlv. 11.

self-love. For example, a certain thing pleases us; we must leave it for the very reason that it pleases us. A certain person has injured us; we must do him good for this very reason. In a word, we must desire and not desire, exactly as God desires or does not desire, without inclination to any one thing; because we do not know that what we ourselves wish is the will of God.

Oh, how easily is God found by every one who detaches himself from creatures in order to find him! *The Lord is good to the soul that seeks Him.*[1] St. Francis de Sales wrote, "The pure love of God consumes everything that is not God, in order to convert everything into itself." We must, therefore, offer ourselves as an inclosed garden, as the holy spouse in the Canticles is called by God, *My sister, my spouse, is an inclosed garden.*[2] The soul that keeps its door shut against earthly affections is called an inclosed garden. It is God who has given us everything that we have, and it is right that he should require of us all our love. When, then, any creature would enter and take up a portion of our love, we must altogether deny it an entrance, and, turning to our greatest good, we must say, with all our heart, "What have I in heaven, and what have I desired upon earth, but Thee, O God of my heart, and my portion forever?" "O my God! what but Thyself can satisfy my soul? No; except Thee I desire nothing either in heaven or on earth; Thou alone art sufficient for me, O God of my heart, and my portion forever!"

Oh! happy is he who can say, "I have despised the kingdom of the world, and all the glory of the time, for the love of my Lord Jesus Christ."[3] Truly, that great servant of God, Sister Margaret of the Cross, the

[1] "Bonus est Dominus . . . animæ quærenti illum."—*Lam.* iii. 25.

[2] "Hortus conclusus soror mea Sponsa."—*Cant.* iv. 12.

[3] Regnum mundi et omnem ornatum sæculi contempsi, propter amorem Domini mei Jesu Christi.

daughter of the Emperor Maximilian II, could say this, when, at her profession, she stripped herself of her rich garments and gems, to clothe herself in the poor woollen habit of the Barefooted Nuns of the Strict Rule of St. Clare; and when, as the author of her life relates, she cast them away with a contempt that moved to tears of devotion all who were present at the function.

O my Jesus! for myself I do not desire that creatures should have any part in my heart; Thou must be my only Lord, by possessing it altogether. Let others seek the delights and grandeurs of this life; Thou alone, both in the present and future life, must be my only portion, my only good, my only love. And, as Thou lovest me, as I see by all the signs Thou givest me, help me to detach myself from everything that can draw me from Thy love. Grant that my soul may be all taken up with pleasing Thee, as the only object of all my affections. Take possession of all my heart; I would be no longer my own. Do Thou rule me, and make me ready to follow out all Thy will. O Mary, Mother of God! in thee I trust; thy prayers can make me belong wholly to Jesus.

XXXIII.

The Sight and Love of God in the Next Life will Constitute the Joy of the Blessed.

Let us see what it will be which in heaven will make those holy citizens completely happy. The soul in heaven when it sees God face to face, and knows his infinite beauty, and all his perfections that render him worthy of infinite love, cannot but love him with all its powers, and it loves him far more than itself; it even, as it were, forgets itself, and desires nothing but to behold him satisfied and loved who is its God; and seeing that God, who is the only object of all its affections, enjoys an infinite delight, this joy of God constitutes all its

paradise. If it were capable of anything that is infinite, in seeing that its Beloved is infinitely content, its own joy thereupon would be also infinite; but, as a creature is not capable of infinite joy, it rests at least satisfied with joy to such an extent that it desires nothing more; and this is that satisfaction that David sighed for, when he said, *I shall be satisfied when Thy glory shall appear.*[1]

Thus also is fulfilled what God says to the soul when he admits it into paradise, *Enter into the joy of thy Lord.*[2] He does not bid joy enter into the soul, because this his joy, being infinite, cannot be contained in the creature; but he bids the soul enter into his joy, that it may receive a portion of it, and such a portion as will satisfy it, and fill it with delight.

Therefore, I am of opinion that in meditation, among all acts of love towards God, there is none more perfect than the taking delight in the infinite joy of God. This is certainly the continual exercise of the blessed in heaven; so that he who often rejoices in the joy of God begins in this life to do that which he hopes to do in heaven through all eternity.

The love with which the saints in paradise burn towards God is such that if ever a fear of losing it were to enter their thoughts, or they were to think that they should not love him with all their powers, as now they love him, this fear would cause them to experience the pains of hell. But it is not so; for they are as sure, as they are sure of God, that they will ever love him with all their powers, and that they will be ever loved by God, and this mutual love will never change throughout eternity. O my God! make me worthy of this, through the merits of Jesus Christ.

This happiness, which constitutes paradise, will be further increased by the splendor of that delightful city

[1] "Satiabor, cum apparuerit gloria tua."—*Ps.* xvi. 15.

[2] "Intra in gaudium Domini tui."—*Matt.* xxv. 21.

of God, the beauty of its inhabitants, and by their companionship, especially by that of the Queen of all, Mary, who will appear fairer than all, and by that of Jesus Christ, whose beauty again will infinitely surpass that of Mary.

The joy of the blessed will be increased by the dangers of losing so great a good, which they have all passed through in this life. What, then, will be the thanksgivings that they offer to God, when, through their own sins, they have deserved hell, and now find themselves there on high, whence they will see so many condemned to hell for less guilt than their own, while they are saved, and sure of not losing God, being destined to enjoy eternally those boundless delights in heaven, of which they will never grow weary. In this life, however great and continual be our joys, with time they always weary us; but for the delights of paradise, the more they are enjoyed, the more they are desired; and thus the blessed are ever satisfied and filled with these delights, and ever desire them: they ever desire them, and ever obtain them. Wherefore that sweet song with which the saints praise God and thank him for the happiness he has given them, is called a *new song: Sing to the Lord a new song.*[1] It is called new, because the rejoicings of heaven seem ever new, as though they were experienced for the first time; and thus they ever rejoice in them, and ever ask for them; and, as they ever ask for them, they ever obtain them. Thus, as the damned are called "vessels of wrath,"[2] the blessed are called "vessels of divine love."[3]

Justly, then, does St. Augustine[4] say that to obtain this eternal blessedness there is needed a boundless labor. Hence, it was little that the anchorites did with

[1] "Cantate Domino canticum novum."—*Ps.* xcvii. 1.

[2] Vasa iræ.

[3] Vasa charitatis.

[4] *In Ps.* xxxvi. s. 2.

their penitential works and prayers to gain Paradise; it was little for the saints to leave their riches and kingdoms to gain it; little that the martyrs suffered from instruments of torture, and burning irons, and cruel deaths.

Let us, at any rate, give heed to suffer joyfully the crosses that God sends us, because they all, if we are saved, will become for us eternal joys. When infirmities, pains, or any adversities afflict us, let us lift up our eyes to heaven and say, "One day all these pains will have an end, and after them I hope to enjoy God forever." Let us take courage to suffer, and to despise the things of the world. Blessed is he who in death can say with St. Agatha, "O Lord, who hast taken from me the love of the world, receive my soul."[1] Let us endure everything, let us despise everything that is created; it is Jesus who awaits us, and stands with the crown in his hands to make us kings in heaven, if we be faithful to him.

But how can I, O my Jesus! aspire to so great a good, —I, who have so often, through the miserable desires of earth, renounced Paradise before Thee, and trodden under foot Thy grace? Yet Thy blood gives me courage to hope for Paradise, though I have so often deserved hell, because Thou hast died upon the cross, in order to bestow Paradise upon those who have not deserved it. O my God and Redeemer! I would no more lose Thee; give me help to be faithful to Thee; Thy kingdom come; through the merits of Thy blood grant me one day to enter Thy kingdom; and, in the mean while, until death comes, enable me perfectly to fulfil Thy will, which is the greatest good, and is that Paradise which can be possessed upon earth by him who loves Thee.

[1] "Domine, qui abstulisti a me amorem sæculi, accipe animam meam."—*In ejus off. lect.* 6.

Therefore, O ye souls who love God! while we live in this vale of tears, let us ever sigh for Paradise, and say, "O fair country, wherein love bestows itself upon love, I sigh for Thee hour by hour; when, O my God, when will it be here?"

XXXIV.

Meditation before the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar.

Meditation, wherever it is made, pleases God; but it appears that Jesus Christ especially delights in the meditation that is made before the Most Holy Sacrament, since it appears that there he bestows light and grace most abundantly upon those who visit him. He has left himself in this Sacrament, not only to be the food of souls which receive him in Holy Communion, but also to be found at all times by every one who seeks him. Devout pilgrims go to the holy house of Loretto, where Jesus Christ dwelt during his life, and to Jerusalem, where he died on the cross; but how much greater ought to be our devotion when we find him before us in a tabernacle, where this Lord himself now dwells in person, who lived among us, and died for us on Calvary!

It is not permitted in the world for persons of all ranks to speak alone with kings; but with Jesus Christ, the King of heaven, both nobles and plebeians, rich and poor, can converse at their will in this Sacrament, and employ themselves as long as they will in setting before him their wants, and in seeking his graces; and there Jesus gives audience to all, hears all, and comforts them.

Men of the world, who know no treasures but those of the earth, cannot comprehend what pleasure can be found in spending a long time before an altar, where is placed a consecrated Host; but to souls which love God, hours and days passed before the Blessed Sacrament seem as moments, for the celestial sweetness which the Lord there gives them to taste and to enjoy.

But how can worldly people expect to enjoy this sweetness if they keep their hearts and thoughts full of the earth? St. Francis Borgia said that in order that divine love may rule in our hearts, we must first drive the world away from them; otherwise, divine love will never enter into them, because it finds no place to rest. *Be still, and see that I am God*,[1] said David. In order to have experience of God, and to prove how sweet he is to them that love him, our hearts must be empty, that is, detached from earthly affections. Wouldst Thou find God? "Detach thyself from creatures, and thou shalt find him," said St. Teresa.

What should a soul do when in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament? It should love and pray. It should not stand there in order to experience sweetness and consolation, but only to give pleasure to God, by making acts of love, by giving itself wholly to God without reserve, by stripping itself of its own will, and offering itself in saying, "O my God, I love Thee, and desire nothing but Thee; grant that I may ever love Thee, and then do with me and with all that I possess according to Thy pleasure." Among all acts of love, that is most pleasing to God which the blessed continually exercise in heaven,—that is to say, the rejoicing in the infinite joy of God; for the blessed soul loves God infinitely more than itself, and therefore desires the happiness of her Beloved far more than her own; and seeing that God enjoys an infinite joy, the blessed soul would thence receive an infinite delight; but as a creature is not capable of an infinite delight, it rests full of satisfaction, and thus the joy of God constitutes its joy and its Paradise. These acts of love, even when made by us without any sensible sweetness, please God greatly. He also does not give to souls whom he loves a perpetual enjoyment of his comfort in this life, but only at

[1] "Vacate, et videte quoniam ego sum Deus."—*Ps.* xlv. 11.

intervals; and when he gives them, he gives them not so much as a reward for good works (the full reward of which he reserves for them in heaven), as to give them more strength to suffer with patience the troubles and adversities of this present life, and especially the distractions and dryness of spirit which pious souls experience in meditation.

So far as distractions are concerned, of these we must not make much account, it is enough to drive them away when they come. For the rest, even the saints suffered involuntary distractions. But they did not on this account leave off meditation; and so also must we do ourselves. St. Francis de Sales said that if in meditation we did nothing but drive away, or seek to drive away, distractions, our meditation would be of great profit. As for dryness of spirit, the greatest pain of souls in meditation is to find themselves sometimes without a feeling of devotion, weary of it, and without any sensible desire of loving God; and with this is often joined the fear of being in the wrath of God through their sins, on account of which the Lord has abandoned them; and being in this gloomy darkness, they know not any way of escaping from it, it seeming to them that every way is closed against them. Let the devout soul, then, continue strong in not leaving off meditation, as the devil will suggest to it. At such a time let it unite its desolation to that which Jesus Christ suffered upon the cross; and if it can only say this, it is enough to say it, at least with the intention of the will, "My God, I would love Thee, I would be wholly thine. Have pity on me; oh, leave me not!" Let it say, also, as a holy soul said to its God, in a time of desolation, "I love Thee, though I seem to myself an enemy in Thy sight: drive me away as Thou wilt; I will ever follow after Thee."

XXXV.

In God Alone is Found True Peace.

He that seeks peace in creatures will never find it, because no creatures are fitted for giving satisfaction to the heart. God has created man for himself, who is an infinite good; wherefore God alone can content him. Hence it comes that many persons, though loaded with riches, honors, and earthly pleasures, are never satisfied; they are ever seeking for more honors, more possessions, more amusements; and, however many they obtain, they are always restless, and never enjoy a day of true peace. *Delight thou in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desire of thy heart.*[1] When any person delights only in God, and seeks nothing but God, God himself will take care to satisfy all the desires of his heart; and then he will attain the happy state of those souls who desire nothing but to please God.

Senseless are they who say, "Happy is he who can employ himself as he likes, who can command others, who can take what pleasures he pleases." It is madness; he alone is happy who loves God, who says that God alone is sufficient for him. Experience shows clearly that multitudes of persons who are called fortunate by men of the world, because they are raised up to the possession of great riches and great dignities, live a miserable life, and never find rest.

But how is this, that so many rich and titled people, and princes, in the midst of the abundance of the goods of the world, do not find peace? And, on the other hand, how is it that so many good religious, who live retired in a cell, poor and hidden, pass their days so happily? How is it that so many solitaries, living in a

[1] "Delectare in Domino, et dabit tibi petitiones cordis tui."—*Ps* xxxvi. 4.

desert or within a cave, suffering hunger and cold, yet rejoice with gladness? It is because they wait only on God, and God comforts them.

The peace of God surpasseth all understanding.[1] Oh, how the peace which the Lord gives to those who love him exceeds all the delights which the world can give! *Oh, taste and see how sweet the Lord is.*[2] O men of the world! cries the prophet, why will ye despise the life of the saints without having ever known it? Try it, for once; leave the world, leave it, and give yourself to God, and you will see how well he knows how to comfort you more than all the greatnesses and delights of this world.

It is true that even the saints suffer great troubles in this life; but they, resigning themselves to the will of God, never lose their peace The lovers of the world seem now at times joyful, at times sad, but, in truth, they are ever restless and in a state of storms. On the other hand, the lovers of God are superior to all adversity and to the changes of this world, and therefore they live in uniform tranquility. See how the celebrated Cardinal Petrucci describes a soul that is wholly given to God: "It beholds all creatures around change into a thousand various forms, while within, the depths of its heart, ever united with God, continue without change."

But he who would live ever united with God, and would enjoy a continual peace, must drive from his heart everything that is not God, and live as if he were dead to earthly affections O my God! give me strength to separate myself from all the snares that draw me to the world. Grant that I may think of nothing but to please Thee.

Happy are they for whom God alone is sufficient! O Lord! give me grace that I may seek nothing but Thee, and ask for nothing but to love Thee and give Thee

[1] "Pax Dei, quæ exsuperat omnem sensum."—*Phil.* iv. 7.

[2] "Gustate, et videte quoniam suavis est Dominus."—*Ps.* xxxiii. 9.

pleasure. For love of Thee I now renounce all earthly pleasures, I renounce also all spiritual consolations; I desire nothing but to do Thy will, and to give Thee pleasure. O Mother of God! recommend me to thy Son, who denies thee nothing.

XXXVI.

We Ought to Have God Alone as the End of Our Actions.

In all our actions we should have no other end in view than to please God; not to please our relatives, friends, great people, or ourselves, because everything that is not done for the sake of God is lost. Many things are done for the sake of pleasure, or in order not to displease men; but, says St. Paul, *If I yet please men, I should not be the servant of God.*[1] God only must be regarded in everything we do, so that we may say, as Jesus Christ said, *I do always the things that please him.*[2] It is God who has given us everything we have; we have nothing of our own, except nothingness and sin. It is God alone who has truly loved us. He has loved us from eternity, and he has loved us so far as to give himself for us upon the cross and in the Sacrament of the altar: God alone, therefore, deserves all our love.

Unhappy is the soul that looks with affection upon any object upon earth which displeases God. It will never know peace in this life, and it is in imminent peril of never enjoying peace in the next. But happy is he, O my God! who seeks Thee alone, and renounces everything for Thy love. He will find that pearl of Thy pure love a joy more precious than all the treasures and kingdoms of the earth. He that does this obtains the true liberty of the sons of God, for he finds himself freed

[1] "Si adhuc hominibus placerem, Christi servus non essem."—*Gal.* i. 10.

[2] "Ego, quæ placita sunt ei, facio semper."—*John*, viii. 29.

from all the bonds that bind him to earth, and hinder him from uniting himself to God.

O my God and my all! I would rather have Thee than all the riches, honors, knowledge, glory, expectations, and gifts that Thou couldst give me. Thou art all my good. Thee alone I desire, and nothing more; for Thou alone art infinitely beautiful, infinitely kind, infinitely worthy of love, in a word, Thou art the only thing that is good. Wherefore every gift that is not Thyself is not enough for me. I repeat, and I will ever repeat it, Thee alone I wish for, and nothing more; and whatever is less than Thee, I say it again, is not sufficient for me.

Oh, when will it be given me to occupy myself wholly in praising Thee, loving Thee, and pleasing Thee, so that I shall no more think of the creature, nor even of myself? O my Lord and my love! help me when Thou seest me growing cold in Thy love, in danger of giving my affection to creatures and to earthly goods; *Stretch forth Thy hand from on high, seize me, and deliver me from many waters.*[1] Deliver me from the danger of going far away from Thee.

Let others seek what they will; it pleases not me, and I desire nothing but Thee, my God, my love and my hope: *What have I in heaven, and what have I desired on earth, but Thee, O thou God of my heart, and my portion forever; my God and my all?*[2]

Let men undeceive themselves; all good things that come from creatures are but dust, smoke, and deceits; God alone can satisfy them. But in this life he does not grant us to enjoy him fully; he only gives us certain foretastes of the good things which he promises us in

[1] "Emitte manum tuam de alto, cripe me, et libera me de aquis multis."—*Ps.* cxliii. 7.

[2] "Quid enim mihi est in cœlo? et a te quid volui super terram? . . . Deus cordis mei, et pars mea Deus in æternum."—*Ps.* lxxii. 25.

heaven; there he waits to satisfy us with his own joy, when he will say to us, *Enter into the joy of thy Lord.*[1] The Lord gives heavenly consolations to his servants, only to make them yearn for that happiness which he prepares for them in Paradise.

O almighty God! O God worthy of love! grant that in all things henceforth we may love and seek nothing but Thy pleasure. Grant that Thou mayest be my all and my only love, since Thou alone, both justly and through gratitude, dost deserve all our affections. I have no greater pain to afflict me than the thought that in times past I have so little loved Thy infinite goodness; but I desire and resolve, with Thy help, to love Thee with all my strength for the time to come, and thus I hope to die, loving Thee alone, my greatest good. O Mary, Mother of God! pray for me, a miserable being: thy prayers are never refused; pray to Jesus, that he may make me all his own.

XXXVII.

We must Suffer Everything in order to Please God.

This has been the one chief and dearest endeavor of all saints,—to desire with their whole heart to endure every toil, all contempt, every pain, in order to please God, and thus to please that divine heart, which so much deserves to be loved, and loves us so much.

In this consists all perfection, and the love of a soul towards God, in its ever seeking the pleasure of God, and the doing of that which most pleases God. Oh, blessed is he who can say with Jesus Christ, *Those things which are pleasing to Thee, I always do.*[2] And what greater honor, what greater comfort, can a soul have than to go

[1] "Intra in gaudium Domini tui."—*Matt.* xxv. 21.

[2] "Ego, quæ placita sunt ei, facio semper."—*John*, viii. 29.

through some fatigue, or to accept some labor, believing it to be acceptable to God?

It is more than a duty that we should give pleasure to that God who has so much loved us, has given us all that we possess; and, not content with giving us so many blessings, has gone so far as to give himself for us upon the cross, dying upon it for love of us; and then has instituted the Sacrament of the altar, where he gives himself wholly to us in the Holy Communion, so that he has no more that he can give.

On this account the saints have never known where to stay, in order to give pleasure to God. How many young nobles have left the world, in order to give themselves wholly to God! How many young women, even of royal blood, have renounced marriage with the great in order to shut themselves up in a cloister! How many anchorites have gone to hide themselves in deserts and caves in order to meditate upon God alone! How many martyrs have embraced scourges and fiery plates, and the most cruel torments of tyrants, in order to please God! In a word, in order to give pleasure to God, the saints have stripped themselves of their possessions, have renounced the greatest earthly dignities, and have accepted as treasures infirmities, persecutions, the loss of property, and the most painful and desolate deaths.

The good pleasure of God, therefore, if we truly love it, ought to be preferred by us to the acquisition of all riches, of the loftiest glory, of all the delights of earth, and even of Paradise itself; for it is certain that all the blessed, if they were to know that it would please God more that they should burn in hell, one and all, even the Mother of God among them, would cast themselves into that abyss of flames, and suffer eternally in order to give greater pleasure to God.

For this end the Lord has placed us in the world, in order that we may devote ourselves to pleasing him,

and to giving him glory. Wherefore the will of God ought to be the one object of all our desires, of all our thoughts and actions. Well does that heart deserve to be pleased in all things which has so greatly loved us, and is so anxious for our good.

But how is it, O Lord! that, ungrateful, instead of seeking to give Thee pleasure, I have so often displeased Thee? Yet the abhorrence which Thou causest me to feel for the sins I have committed against Thee teaches me that Thou dost desire to pardon me. Pardon me, then, and suffer me not to be any more ungrateful to Thee. Grant that I may conquer everything to give Thee pleasure. In Thee, O Lord! have I hoped; I shall not be confounded forever.[1] O Queen of Heaven, and my Mother! draw me wholly to God.

XXXVIII.

Happy is he who Desires Nothing but God.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.[2] By "the poor in spirit" is meant those who are poor in earthly desires, and desire nothing but God. These are poor in desires, but not without affection, because they live contented even in this life; and, therefore, the Lord does not say, "Theirs will be the kingdom of heaven," but "theirs is," because even in this life they are rich in spiritual blessings which they receive from God; and thus, however poor they are in temporal goods, they live content with their condition. They are different from the rich in earthly desires, who, in the present life, whatever riches they possess, are always poor, and live discontented; for the good things of this life do not satisfy our thirst, however much they are increased;

[1] "In te, Domine, speravi, non confundar in æternum."—*Ps.* xxx. 2.

[2] "Beati pauperes spiritu, quoniam ipsorum est regnum cœlorum."—*Matt.* v. 3.

wherefore, these persons are never contented, never attaining to the acquisition of what they desire.

In order to enrich us with true riches, Jesus Christ chose to be a poor man, as the Apostle writes, *For your sakes He became poor, that by His poverty ye might become rich.*[1] He chose to be poor in order to teach us by his example to despise earthly blessings; and thus to enrich us with heavenly blessings, which are infinitely more precious, and which last forever. Wherefore he declared that whoever did not renounce every species of attachment to this earth could not be his true disciple.

Happy he who desires nothing but God, and can say, with St. Paulinus, "Let the rich have their riches, kings their kingdoms; Christ is my wealth and my kingdom."[2] Let us rest assured that God alone can content us, but he does not fully content any but those souls which love him with a whole heart. And what place can the love of God find in a heart that is full of this earth? Such people may go often to communion, and pay visits to the Blessed Sacrament; but, because this earth is in their hearts, God cannot wholly possess them, and enrich them as he would.

Many souls lament that in their meditations and communions, and in their other most devout exercises, they do not find God. To such St. Teresa said, "Detach thy heart from all creatures, and thou shalt find God." Let us strip ourselves of every affection that tends to earthly things, and especially of our own will; let us give to God our whole will, without reserve, and say to him, "Lord, do Thou dispose of me, and of all I have, as Thou wilt; I desire nothing but what Thou desirest, and I know

[1] "Propter vos egenus factus est, ut illius inopia vos divites essetis."—2 *Cor.* viii. 9.

[2] "Sibi habeant divitias suas divites, sibi regna sua reges; nobis gloria et possessio et regnum Christus est."—*Ep. ad Aprum.*

that what Thou wilt is the best for me. Grant me, then, that I may ever love Thee, and I desire nothing more."

The only means for detaching ourselves from creatures is to acquire a great love for God. If the love of God does not go so far as to obtain the mastery over our own will, we shall never attain to being saints. The means for acquiring this ruling love is devout prayer. Let us constantly pray to God to give us his love, that we may thus find ourselves detached from every created thing. Divine love is a thief, which, in a holy way, robs us of all earthly affections, and causes us to say, "What other thing do I desire but Thee alone, O God of my heart!"

Love is strong as death.[1] This means that as there is no power that resists death, so there is nothing, even of things most invincible, that can resist the love of God. Love conquers everything. With the love of God the martyrs conquered the fiercest torments and the most agonizing deaths.

Oh, happy indeed is he who can say with David, *What have I in heaven, and what have I desired upon earth, but Thee, O God of my heart, and my portion forever!* What else can I desire in this life and in eternity, but Thee alone, O my God? Let others find the good things they choose; be Thou, O God of my heart, my only good; be Thou all my peace.

In what peril does the soul stand of losing God and perishing when it has not attained to the giving itself wholly to God; while he who has truly given himself altogether to God can rest secure of never leaving him, because the Lord is truly merciful and faithful to every one who gives himself to him without reserve. But why is it that some persons, who began by living a holy life, afterwards fall so grievously, that they leave us little hope of their salvation? Why, indeed, is this? I answer,

[1] "Fortis est ut mors dilectio."—*Cant.* viii. 6.

that they had not given themselves wholly to God; and this their fall is the proof of it.

O my God, and my true lover! suffer it not that my soul, which was created to love Thee, should love anything apart from Thee, and should not wholly belong to Thee, who hast purchased me with Thy blood. O my Jesus! how is it possible that, after having known the love which Thou hast borne to me, I can love anything apart from Thee? Draw me continually within Thy heart; make me forget everything that I may neither seek nor sigh after anything but Thy love. O my Jesus! in Thee I trust. O Mary, Mother of God! in thee is my hope; detach me from the love of everything that is not of God, that he may be the one object of all my affections, and of my eternal happiness.

XXXIX.

Dryness of Spirit.

St. Francis de Sales said that true devotion and the true love of God do not consist in the receiving of spiritual consolations in prayer and other devout exercises, but in the possession of a resolute will to desire and to do nothing but what God wills. This is the one end for which we should apply ourselves to prayer, to Communion, to mortification, and to every other thing that is pleasing to God; even though we experience in them no sweet flavor, and continue in the midst of temptations, and in a desolateness of spirit. "With dryness of mind and temptations," said St. Teresa, "the Lord makes trial of those who love him." Even if this dryness last for the whole of life, let not the soul leave off prayer; the time will come when all will be abundantly rewarded.

As all masters of the spiritual life recommend, in time of desolation we ought especially to exercise ourselves

in acts of humility and resignation. There is no better time for learning our own helplessness and our misery than when we are barren in prayer, wearied, distracted, and desolate, without any perceptible fervor, and even without perceptible desires for making progress in divine love. At such times let the soul say, "Lord, have mercy upon me; behold how powerless I am to do a single good deed." We must besides resign ourselves to the will of God, and say, "O my God, it is Thy will to keep me thus in darkness, thus in affliction; may Thy holy will be ever done. I desire not to be comforted; it is enough for me to abide solitary to give Thee pleasure." And thus we ought to persevere in prayer during all its duration.

The greatest trouble, however, which any one suffers in prayer is not so much a dryness as a darkness, in which he finds himself stripped of every good wish, and tempted to give up faith and hope. Sometimes, in addition, he experiences violent attacks of temptations, and such distrust that he continues in grievous fear of having even lost the grace of God, and that for his sins God had driven him from Him, and had abandoned him; so that he looks upon himself as abhorred by God; and therefore at such times solitude torments him, and meditation seems to him like a kind of hell. Then must he take courage, and recollect that this dread of having yielded to temptation or to despair is simply the dread and the torment of the soul, but not a voluntary act, and therefore he is free from sin. At such a time a person really resists temptation with his will, though, through the darkness which enshrouds him, he is not able distinctly to perceive it. And the proof of this is the experience which he has, that if he were to be tempted knowingly to commit a single venial sin, his soul, which loves God, would rather accept death a thousand times.

On this account, we must not trouble ourselves at such

times to attain a certainty that we are in the grace of God, and that there is no sin in what we are doing. Thou wouldst then know and be sure that God loves thee; but at such a time God does not choose to let thee know it; he wills that thou shouldst only strive to humble thyself, and trust in his goodness, and resign thyself to his will. Thou wouldst see that God does not will that thou shouldst see. For the rest, St. Francis de Sales says that the resolution which thou hast (at least in thy will) to love God, and not to cause him deliberately the slightest displeasure, is an assurance that thou art in the grace of God. Abandon thyself, therefore, at such times, to the divine mercy; declare to God that thou desirest nothing but him and his will, and fear not. Oh, how dear to the Lord are these acts of confidence and resignation, accomplished in the midst of this terrible darkness.

For forty-one years, St. Jane Frances of Chantal suffered these internal pains, accompanied by terrible temptations, and by fears that she was in a state of sin, and was abandoned by God. Her pangs were so great that she was accustomed to say that the thought of death was the only thing that gave her relief. She was wont to say, "Sometimes it seems to me that my patience is exhausted, and that I am on the point of giving up everything, and of abandoning myself to perdition." For the last eight or nine years of her life, her temptations, instead of diminishing, became fiercer; so that whether she was praying or in any occupation, her inward martyrdom was such as to call forth the compassion of every one who associated with her. It seemed to her sometimes that God had driven her from him, so that to relieve herself, she turned her thoughts away from God; but not finding the relief she sought, she turned again to the contemplation of God, even though he seemed wroth against her. In meditations, in communions, and other

devout exercises, she experienced nothing but weariness and torment. She seemed to herself to be like a sick person overwhelmed with complaints, unable to turn herself from side to side; dumb, so as not to be able to explain her sufferings; and blind, so that she could see no way of escaping from the depths. She seemed to have lost love, hope, and faith; and, for the rest, she kept her eyes fixed upon God, resting upon the arm of the divine will. In a word, St. Francis de Sales used to say to her that that blessed soul was like a deaf musician who could sing most admirably, but had no pleasure in his voice, because he could not hear it.

The soul, therefore, which finds itself tried with dryness, however it may be oppressed with gloom, must not lose courage, but trust in the blood of Jesus Christ, and resign itself to the divine will, and say: "O Jesus, my hope, and my soul's only love! I deserve no consolations; give them to those who have always loved Thee; I have deserved hell, and to be ever abandoned there by Thee, without hope of ever being able to love Thee. But no, my Saviour, I accept every pain; punish me as Thou wilt, but deprive me not of the power of loving Thee. Take from me everything, except Thyself. Miserable as I am, I love Thee more than myself, and I give myself wholly to Thee; I desire to live no more for myself. Give me strength to be faithful to Thee. O holy Virgin, hope of sinners! I trust in thy intercession; make me love my God, who has created and redeemed me."

XL.

The Retired Life.

Souls that love God find their Paradise in the retired life, in which they have no communication with men. It brings no bitterness nor weariness to converse with God and to separate ourselves from creatures. *His conversa-*

tion has no bitterness, nor does His society bring weariness, but joy and gladness.[1]

Worldly people, with good reason, fly from solitude; because in solitude, where they are not occupied with diversions or worldly business, the remorse of conscience makes itself felt more acutely in their hearts; and therefore such persons seek to relieve themselves, or at least to distract their thoughts, by conversing with men; but the more they study to relieve themselves among men, and in the midst of worldly affairs, the more they encounter thorns and bitter disappointments.

To the lovers of God this does not happen, because in their retirement they find a sweet companion, who comforts them and makes them glad, more than the company of all their friends or relatives, or of the highest personages of the earth. St. Bernard said, "I am never less alone than when alone[2]—never less alone than when far from men; for then I find God who speaks to me, and then I find myself more ready to listen to him, and more prepared to attach myself to him?" Our Saviour desired that his disciples, although he had destined them to propagate the faith by journeying through the whole world, from time to time should leave their labors, and retire to solitude, to commune with God alone. Besides, let us remember that Jesus Christ, from the time when he began to live with the world, was wont to send them into the different parts of Judea, that they might convert sinners; but, after their labors, he did not cease to call them to retire to some solitary place, saying to them, *Come ye apart to a desert, and rest a while; for those who came and returned were many, and the disciples had no time to eat.*[3]

[1] "Non enim habet amaritudinem conversatio illius, nec tædium convictus illius, sed lætitiam et gaudium."—*Wis.* viii. 16.

[2] Nunquam minus solus, quam cum solus.

[3] "Et ait illis: Venite seorsum in desertum locum, et requiescite pusillum,"—*Mark*, vi. 31.

If our Lord said, even to the Apostles, "Rest a while," it is indeed necessary for all holy laborers to retire, from time to time, into solitude, to preserve their recollectedness with God, and to obtain strength to labor with greater vigor for the salvation of souls.

He that labors for his neighbor but with little zeal, and with little love towards God, retaining some object dictated by self-love, and seeking to gain honor or wealth, does little for the gaining of souls. Therefore our Lord says to his workmen, "Rest a little while." Certainly Jesus Christ did not mean by this expression that the Apostles were to set themselves to slumber, but that they should repose in holding communion with God, in praying to him for the graces necessary for living well, and thus should gain strength for conducting the salvation of souls, for without this rest with God in prayer, strength fails for laboring rightly to our own benefit, and to the profit of others.

St. Laurence Justinian wisely remarks, when speaking of the retired life, that it is to be always loved, but not always possessed; meaning to say that they who are called by God to the conversion of sinners must not remain always in solitude shut up in a cell, for they would fail of their divine calling, to obey which, when it is God who calls them, they must leave their retirement; yet they should never cease to love and to sigh for solitude, whenever God makes it more easy for them to find it.

O my Jesus! I have loved solitude little, because I have loved Thee little. I have gone about seeking pleasures and refreshment from creatures who have made me lose Thee, the infinite good. Miserable I am, that for so many years I have kept my heart distracted, thinking only of the good things of earth, and forgetting Thee. Oh, take Thou this heart of mine, since Thou hast bought

it with Thy blood; inflame it with Thy love, and possess it for Thine own. O Mary, Queen of Heaven! thou canst obtain for me this grace; from thee I hope for it.

XLI.

Detachment from Creatures.

In order to attain to loving God with all our heart, we must separate it from everything that is not God, that does not tend towards God. He chooses to be alone in the possession of our hearts; he admits no companions there; and with reason, because he is our only Lord, who has given us everything. Still further, he is our only lover, who has loved us not for his own interest, but solely from his goodness; and because he thus exceedingly loves us, he desires that we should love him with all our hearts: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart."

To love God with our whole heart implies two things: the first is, to drive from it every affection that is not for God, or not according to the will of God. "If I knew," said St. Francis de Sales, "that I had one fibre in my heart which did not belong to God, I would instantly tear it out." The second is prayer, by which holy love introduces itself into the heart. But if the heart does not fly from the earth, love cannot enter, for it finds no place for itself. On the other hand, a heart detached from all creatures instantly becomes inflamed, and increases in divine love at every breathing of grace.

"Pure love," said the holy Bishop of Geneva, "consumes everything that is not God, in order to change it into itself; because everything that is done for God is the love of God." Oh, how is God full of goodness and liberality to those souls that seek nothing but him and his will! *The Lord is good to them that seek Him.*[1] Happy

[1] "Bonus est Dominus . . . animæ quærenti illum."—*Lam.* iii. 25.

he who, living still in the world, can say with truth, with St. Francis, "My God and my all!" and thus can hold in contempt all the vanities of the world. "I have despised the kingdom of the world, and all the glory of this life, for the love of Jesus Christ my Lord."[1]

When, then, creatures would enter into our heart and take a share of this love, all of which we owe to God, we must immediately banish them, shutting the door against them, and saying, "Begone, begone to those who desire you; my heart I have given wholly to Jesus Christ; for you there is no place." And, in addition to this resolution to desire nothing but God, we must hate that which the world loves, and love that which the world hates.

Above all, to attain to perfect love, we must deny ourselves, embracing that which is distasteful to self-love, and rejecting that which self-love demands. A certain thing is pleasant to us; for that very reason, we must reject it. A certain medicine is disagreeable, because it is bitter; we must take it for the very reason that it is bitter. It is unpleasant to us to do good to a certain person who has been ungrateful to us; we must, by all means, do him good, for the very reason that he has been ungrateful.

Further, St. Francis de Sales said that we must love even virtues with a detachment of heart; for example, we ought to love meditation and retirement; but when they are forbidden to us, through the calls of obedience or of charity, we must leave both the one and the other without being disquieted. And thus it is necessary to embrace with equanimity everything that happens to us through the will of God. Happy he who wishes to have or refuses to have, whatever happens, because God wishes it or refuses it, without inclining to either side.

[1] Deus meus, et omnia! Regnum mundi et omnem ornatum sæculi contempsi, propter amorem Domini mei Jesu Christi.

And therefore we must pray the Lord to enable us to find peace in everything that he appoints for us.

It is certain that no one lives more happy in the world than he who despises the things of the world, and lives in continual conformity to the will of God. Therefore, it is a useful thing frequently during the day, or at least at the times of prayer and Communion, to renew at the feet of the crucifix the total renunciation of ourselves and of all our possessions, saying, "O my Jesus! I desire to think no more of myself; I give myself wholly to Thee, do with me what Thou wilt. I see that everything that the world offers me is vanity and deceit. From this day, I would seek nothing but Thee, and Thy good will; help me to be faithful to Thee. O Virgin Mary, pray to Jesus for me."

XLII.

Precious is the Death of the Saints.

Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.[1] Why is the death of the saints called precious? "Because," answers St. Bernard,[2] "it is so rich in blessings which deserve to be purchased at any cost."

Some persons, attached to this world, would wish that there was no such thing as death; but St. Augustine says, "What is it to live long upon this earth, except to suffer long?"[3] "The miseries and difficulties that constantly weary us in this present life are so great," says St. Ambrose, "that death seems rather a relief than a punishment."[4]

Death terrifies sinners, because they know that from

[1] "Pretiosa in conspectu Domini mors sanctorum ejus."—*Ps.* cxv. 15.

[2] *In Trans. S. Mal.* s. 1.

[3] "Quid est diu vivere, nisi diu torqueri?"—*Serm.* 84 *E. B.*

[4] Ut mors remedium esse videatur, non pœna.

the first death, if they die in sin, they will pass to the second death, which is eternal; but it does not terrify good souls, who, trusting in the merits of Jesus Christ, have sufficient signs to give them a moral assurance that they are in the grace of God. Wherefore, those words, "Depart, Christian soul, from this world," which are so terrible to those who die against their will, do not afflict the saints, who preserve their hearts free from worldly love, and with a true affection can continue repeating, "My God and my all." [1]

To these, death is not a torment, but a rest from the pains they have suffered in struggling with temptations, and in quieting their scruples, and their fear of offending God; so that what St. John writes of them is fulfilled: *Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord! Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors.*[2] He that dies loving God is not disturbed by the pains that death brings with it; but rather it is delightful to such persons to offer them to God, as the last remains of their life. Oh, what peace is experienced by him who dies, when he has abandoned himself into the arms of Jesus Christ who chose for himself a death of bitterness and desolation, that he might obtain for us a death of sweetness and resignation!

O my Jesus! Thou art my judge, but Thou art also my Redeemer, who hast died to save me. From my first sin I have deserved to be condemned to hell, but in Thy mercy Thou hast given me a deep sorrow for my sins, wherefore I confidently hope that now Thou hast pardoned me. I have not deserved to love Thee; but with Thy gifts Thou hast drawn me to Thy love. If it is Thy will that this sickness shall bring death to me, I willingly receive it. I see truly that I do not now deserve to enter

[1] Deus meus, et omnia!

[2] "Beati mortui, qui in Domino moriuntur. Amodo jam dicit Spiritus, ut requiescant a laboribus suis."—*Apoc.* xiv. 13.

Paradise; I go content to purgatory, to suffer as much as it pleases Thee; there my greatest pain will be to continue far from Thee, and I shall sigh to come and see Thee and love Thee face to face; therefore, O my beloved Saviour! have mercy upon me.

And what else is this present life, but a state of perpetual peril of losing God? "We walk amidst snares," says St. Ambrose; amidst the deceits of enemies, who seek to cause us to lose the divine grace. Therefore St. Teresa, every time that the clock struck, gave thanks to God that another hour of struggle and peril had passed without sin; and therefore she was so rejoiced at the tidings of her coming death, considering that her struggles were over, and the time was near for her to depart and behold her God.

In this present life we cannot live without defects. This is the motive that makes souls that love God even desire death. It was this thought that, at the time of death, gladdened Father Vincent Carafa, when he said, "Now that I finish my life, I cease to displease God." A certain man gave directions to his attendants, that at the time of his death they should often repeat to him these words, "Comfort thyself, because the time is near when thou wilt no more offend God."

And what else is this body to us but a prison in which the soul is incarcerated, so that it cannot depart to unite itself to God? On this account, St. Francis, inflamed with love, at the hour of his death cried out with the prophet, "Take my soul out of prison." O Lord, deliver me from this prison which prevents me from seeing Thee. O death, worthy of love, who can fear thee and not desire thee, since thou art the end of all toils, and the beginning of eternal life! St. Pionius the martyr, standing by the instruments of death, showed himself so full of joy, that the people who stood by wondered at his delight, and asked him how he could be so happy when he

was just going to die. "You are mistaken," said he, as Eusebius relates,—"you are mistaken; I am not hastening to death, but to life."

O most sweet Jesus, I thank Thee for not having called me to death when I was under Thy wrath, and for having won over my soul with such gentle means as Thou hast employed. When I think of the displeasure I have caused Thee, I am ready to die with grief. This my soul, which was lost, I now commit wholly into Thy hands: into Thy hands I commend my spirit; remember, O Lord! that Thou hast redeemed it with Thy death. I love Thee, O infinite goodness! and I desire to depart quickly from this life, that I may come and love Thee with a more perfect love in heaven. And so long as I shall continue to live on this earth, make me continually to comprehend better my obligation to love Thee. O my God! receive me; I give myself wholly to Thee, and I trust in Thee through the merits of Jesus Christ. I also trust in thy intercession, O Mary, my hope!

XLIII.

Lukewarmness.

There are two kinds of lukewarmness; one that can be avoided, and the other that cannot. We cannot avoid that kind which, in the present state of being, is suffered even by spiritual souls, who, through their natural weakness, cannot avoid falling, but who, from time to time, without the full consent of their will, fall into some light fault; from which defects no one is free, because of the corruption of our nature through original sin, without a most special grace, which was granted to none but the Mother of God. God himself permits these flaws in his saints, in order to keep them humble. Often they find themselves without fervor, wearied and wandering in their devout exercises; and at such times of dryness they

are more apt to fall into many defects, at least without deliberation. For the rest, they who find themselves in this condition must not leave off their ordinary devotions nor lose courage, nor believe that they have fallen into real lukewarmness; for this is not lukewarmness. Let them go on with their accustomed exercises, let them detest their defects, let them often renew their resolutions of giving themselves wholly to God, and let them have confidence in him, for he will comfort them. There is true lukewarmness to be mourned over, when the soul falls into venial sins with a full will, and grieves but little for them, and takes little care to avoid them, asserting that they are trifles of no moment. What! is it nothing to displease God? St. Teresa said to her nuns, "My daughters, may God deliver you from known sins, however small."

Yet people say, that such sins do not deprive us of the grace of God. He that says this is in imminent danger of seeing himself one day deprived of divine grace, and in a state of mortal sin. St. Gregory writes, that whoever falls into deliberate mortal sins habitually, without feeling pain at it, and without thinking of amending himself, does not stay just where he has fallen, but goes on to fall down a precipice: "The soul never lies on the spot where it falls."[1] Mortal diseases do not always spring from serious disorders, but from slight disorders of long continuance; and thus the fall of certain souls into a state of sin is often to be attributed to the repetition of venial sins, which make the soul so weak, that when it is attacked by any powerful temptation, it has no strength to resist, and so falls.

"He that despiseth little things, by little degrees shall he fall." He that takes no account of trifling falls, will one day find himself upon a precipice. The Lord said,

[1] "Nunquam illic anima, quo ceciderit, jacet."—*Moral.* l. 31, c. 12.

"Because thou art lukewarm, I am about to vomit thee out of my mouth." This signifies that the soul would be abandoned by God, or at least deprived of those special divine aids which are necessary to preserve us in a state of grace. Let us pay good heed to this. The Council of Trent condemns those who say that we can persevere in grace without a special help from God: "If any man shall say, that the justified can persevere in the justification he has received without the special help of God, let him be accursed." Thus, we cannot persevere in grace without a special extraordinary help from God; but this special help God will justly deny to one who makes no account of committing many venial sins with his eyes open. Is God bound to give this special help to one who thinks nothing of voluntarily causing him continual displeasure? "He that sows sparingly shall reap also sparingly." If we act grudgingly with God, how can we hope that God will act bountifully with us?

Miserable is that soul that is at peace with sin, even when it is venial! Such a one will go from bad to worse; for his passions, ever gaining strength upon him, easily blind him; and when a man is blind, it is easy for him to find himself falling down a precipice when least he expects it. Let us fear to fall into voluntary lukewarmness; for it is like a fever, that does not cause much alarm, but is in itself so malignant, that it is with great difficulty cured.

For the rest, though it is very difficult for a lukewarm person to amend, yet there are remedies, if only he desires amendment. The remedies are: 1. A resolution to escape, at all costs, from this miserable state; 2. The removal of the occasions of falling, without which there is no hope of amendment; and 3. The constant recommendation of himself to God, with fervent prayer that he would give him strength to escape from this deplorable condition, continued until he finds himself free.

O Lord, have mercy upon me! I see that I have deserved to be vomited forth by Thee, for the many defects with which I serve Thee. Miserable I am, for I see myself without love, without confidence, and without desire. O my Jesus! abandon me not; stretch forth Thy powerful hand, and drive me from this depth of lukewarmness in which I see myself fallen. Grant this through the merits of Thy passion, in which I trust. O holy Virgin, pray to Jesus for me!

XLIV.

Purity of Intention.

Purity of intention consists in doing everything from a simple desire to please God. Jesus Christ has said, that according to the intention, whether it be good or evil, so is our work judged before God. *If thine eye be single, thy whole body is full of light; but if thine eye be evil, thy whole body is full of darkness.*[1] The single eye signifies a pure intention of pleasing God; the dark and evil eye signifies a want of such honest and holy intention, when our actions are done from a motive of vanity, or from a desire to please ourselves.

Can any action be more noble than for a man to give his life for the faith? and yet St. Paul says, that he who dies from any motive but that of a pure desire to do God's will, gains nothing by his martyrdom.

If, then, martyrdom avails nothing unless it be endured for the sake of God alone, of what value will be all the preaching, all the labor of good works, and also all the austerities of penitents, if they are done to obtain the praise of men, or to satisfy their own inclination?

The prophet Aggæus says, that works, however holy

[1] "Si oculus tuus fuerit simplex, totum corpus tuum lucidum erit, si autem oculus tuus fuerit nequam, totum corpus tuum tenebrosum erit."—*Matt.* vi. 22.

in themselves, if not done for God, are nothing better than bags full of holes;[1] which means, that they are all lost directly, and that no good comes of them. On the contrary, every action done with an intention of pleasing God, of however little value in itself, is worth more than many works done without such pure intention.

We read in St. Mark that the poor widow cast into the alms-box of the temple only two mites; but yet of her the Saviour said, *See, that poor widow has cast in more than all.*[2] St. Cyprian remarks on this, that she put in more than all the others, because she gave those two little pieces of money with the pure intention of pleasing God.

One of the best signs by which we may know whether a person's work is done with a right intention is, that if the work has not the effect desired he will not be at all disturbed. Another good sign is, that when a person has completed any work, and then is spoken ill of for it, or is repaid with ingratitude, he nevertheless remains contented and tranquil. On the other hand, if it happen to any one to be praised for his work, he must not disquiet himself with the fear of being filled with vain-glory; but should it come upon him, only let him despise it in his heart, and say, with St. Bernard, "I did not begin it for thee, nor because of thee will I leave it."[3]

To work with an intention of acquiring more glory in heaven is good, but the most perfect is the desire to give glory to God. Let us be sure that the more we divest ourselves of our earthly interests, so much the more will our Saviour increase our joy in Paradise. Blessed is he who labors only to give glory to God, and to follow his holy will. Let us imitate the love of the blessed, who, in loving God, seek only to please him. St. Chrysostom

[1] In sacculum pertusum.

[2] "Vidua hæc pauper plus omnibus misit."—*Mark*, xii. 43.

[3] Nec propter te cœpi, nec propter te desinam.

says, "If we can attain to the fulfilment of God's pleasure, what more can we desire? If thou art worthy of doing anything[1] that pleases God, dost thou ask any other reward?"

This is that single eye which pierces the heart of God with love towards us; as he says to the holy Spouse, *Thou hast wounded my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast wounded my heart with one of thine eyes.*[2] This single eye signifies the one end that holy souls have in all their actions, that of pleasing God. And this was the counsel that the Apostle gave to his disciples: *Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God.*[3] The Venerable Beatrice of the Incarnation, the first daughter of St. Teresa, said, "No price can be put on anything, however small, that is done entirely for God." And with great reason she said this, for all works done for God are acts of divine love. Purity of intention makes the lowest actions become precious, such as eating, working, recreation, when they are done from obedience and from a desire to please God.

We must, then, in the morning, direct to God all the actions of the day; and it will be very useful to us to renew this intention at the beginning of every action, at least of the most important, such as meditation, Communion, and spiritual reading—pausing a little in the beginning of these, like the holy hermit, who, before beginning anything he had to do, lifted his eyes to heaven, and remained still; and when he was asked what he was then doing, replied, "I am making sure of my aim."

[1] "Si dignus fueris agere aliquid quod Deo placet, aliam præter id mercedem requiris."—*De Compunct.* l. 2.

[2] "Vulnerasti cor meum, soror mea sponsa, vulnerasti cor meum in uno oculorum tuorum."—*Cant.* iv. 9.

[3] "Sive ergo manducatis, sive bibitis, sive aliud quid facitis, omnia in gloriam Dei facite."—1 *Cor.* x. 31.

When, O my Jesus! shall I begin to love Thee truly? Miserable that I am! If I seek among my works for any that are good,—for one work done only to please Thee, my Saviour,—I shall not find it. Alas! then, have pity on me, and suffer not that I continue to serve Thee so ill up to the time of my death. Grant me Thy help, that what remains to me of life I may spend only in serving and loving Thee. Make me overcome all, that I may please Thee, and do all only to fulfil Thy holy pleasure; through the merits of Thy Passion, I ask it. O my great advocate, Mary, obtain for me this grace by thy prayers!

XLV.

Aspirations after the Country of the Blessed.

Happy is he who is saved; who leaves this place of exile, and enters into the heavenly Jerusalem, and enjoys that perfect day which will be always day and always joyful, free from all molestation, and from all fear of ever losing so infinite a happiness.

Jacob said, *The days of the years of my pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty; few, and evil.*[1] The same may be said of us miserable pilgrims, whilst we remain on this earth, to endure the toils of our exile, afflicted by temptations, torn by passions, and tormented by miseries, and still more by the fear of losing our eternal salvation at last. Seeing all this, we should conclude, and ever keep it in mind, that this is not our country, but a land of exile, where God detains us, in order that we may, through suffering, come to merit the reward of entering one day into our happy country. And thus living detached from this earth, we ought always to aspire after Paradise, saying: "When shall it be, O Lord, that I shall be delivered

[1] "Dies peregrinationis meæ centum triginta annorum sunt, parvi et mali."—*Gen.* xlvii. 9.

from all these distresses, and think only of loving Thee and praising Thee? When will it be that Thou wilt be all to me in all things, as the Apostle writes: *That God may be all in all?*[1] When shall I enjoy that unchanging peace, free from all affliction, and from all danger of being lost? When, my God, shall I find myself dwelling with Thee, and enjoying the sight of Thine infinite beauty face to face, and without veil? When shall I attain to the possession of Thee, my Creator, in such a manner that I may say, My God, I cannot lose Thee more?

O my Saviour, whilst Thou seest me an exile, and full of trouble, in this land of enemies, where I live in continual warfare, help me with Thy grace, and console me in this sorrowful pilgrimage. Whatever the world may offer me, I know that nothing in it can bring peace; but yet I fear lest, if I have not help from Thee, the pleasures of the world, joined to my evil inclinations, should draw me on to some terrible precipice.

Exile as I am in this valley of tears, I would think of Thee continually, O my God! and share in that infinite happiness which Thou enjoyest; but the evil appetites of sense make themselves heard within me, and disturb me. I would that my affections were ever occupied in loving Thee and thanking Thee; but in my flesh I feel drawn towards sensual delights, and thence I am constrained to exclaim with St. Paul, *Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*[2] Miserable man that I am, in continual combat, not only with external enemies, but with myself, whence I am weighed down and a trouble to myself.[3]

Who, then, will deliver me from the body of this death? that is, from the danger of falling into sin, from

[1] "Ut sit Deus omnia in omnibus."—1 *Cor.* xv. 28.

[2] "Infelix ego homo! quis me liberabit de corpore mortis hujus?"—*Rom.* vii. 24.

[3] "Factus sum mihimetipsi gravis."—*Job*, vii. 20

that peril, the fear only of which is to me a continual death, which torments me, and will not cease to torment me during all my life: *Go not far from me, O God; my God, in Thy help I put my trust.*[1]

My God, go not far from me; because if Thou goest from me, I fear I shall displease Thee. Therefore, draw nearer to me with Thy powerful help; succor me continually, that I may be able to resist the attacks of my enemies. The royal prophet has said that Thou art ever near, that Thou dost endow with holy patience all those who are of sorrowful heart, afflicted within themselves.[2] Remain beside me, then, my beloved Saviour, and give me that patience that I need to overcome the continual attacks by which I am tormented. As often as I try to give myself to meditation and prayer, troublesome thoughts draw me away, and distract me with a thousand follies; do Thou give me force to drive them from me, and to crucify all the evil inclinations that hinder me from uniting myself to Thee. And take from me, I pray Thee, the great repugnance that I feel to embracing in love and peace everything that is not according to my own self-love.

O house of my God, prepared for those that love Thee, to Thee I sigh from this land of misery. "I have gone astray as a sheep that is lost: O, seek Thy servant." O beloved Shepherd of my soul, who didst descend from heaven to seek and to save the lost sheep, behold me, one of these who has turned from Thee, and lost itself! Seek Thy servant; Lord, seek me; abandon me not, as I deserve; seek me and save me; take me and keep me safe within Thine arms, that I may not leave Thee any more.

While I am looking towards Paradise with strong

[1] "Deus, ne elongeris a me; Deus meus, in auxilium meum respice."—*Ps.* lxx. 12.

[2] "Juxta est Dominus iis qui tribulato sunt corde."—*Ps.* xxxiii. 19.

desire, my enemy frightens me with the remembrance of my sins; but the sight of Thee, my crucified Jesus, consoles me, and gives me courage to hope that some day I may come to love Thee, and behold Thee unveiled, in Thy blessed kingdom. Queen of heaven, continue to be my advocate. Through the blood of Jesus Christ, and through thine intercession, I have a firm hope of being saved.

PART III.

Spiritual Treatises.*

I. *DIVINE LOVE.*

I.

How much God Deserves to be Loved.

God is a treasury of all grace, of all good, of all perfection.

God is infinite, God is eternal, God is immense, God is unchangeable.

God is powerful, God is wise, God is provident, God is just.

God is merciful, God is holy, God is beautiful, God is

* The little treatises that compose this third part were written and published by St. Alphonsus at different times, without intending to unite them one day in a whole work. We, however, perceive that they naturally adapt themselves to one another, and are intimately connected with one another as the members of the same body. In this combination we have not imitated the order that is observed in the first two parts, because these little works are not simply meditations or detached reflections, but *treatises* which seem to us to require a more systematic order. We have, therefore, arranged them according to the ordinary plan of a moral discourse; namely, the first treatise *proposes* the subject, that is, divine love, which constitutes our whole perfection, and our whole happiness on earth as well as in heaven, and it points out summarily the means thereto. The following four treatises confirm and develop the principal means of acquiring divine love. The sixth treatise, which discourses on Interior Trials, teaches us how to surmount particular difficulties, and even to profit by obstacles in order to raise ourselves to God. Finally, the last two present to us a glowing *peroration* and a practical conclusion.—Ed.

brightness itself, God is rich, God is all things, and he is therefore worthy of love; and of how much love!

God is infinite; he gives to all, and receives nothing from any one. All that we have comes to us from God; but God has nothing from us: *Thou art my God, for Thou hast no need of my goods.*[1]

God is eternal; he has ever been eternal, and always shall be. We can count the years and the days of our existence; but God knows no beginning, and will never have an end; *But Thou art always the selfsame, and Thy years shall not fail.*[2]

God is immense, and is essentially present in every place. We, when we are in one place, cannot be in another. But God is in all places, in heaven, on earth, in the sea, in the depths, without us, and within us. *Whither shall I go from Thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy face? If I ascend into heaven, Thou art there: if I descend into hell, Thou art present.*[3]

God is unchangeable; and all that he has ordained by his holy will from eternity, he wills now, and will do so forever. *For I am the Lord, and I change not.*[4]

God is powerful; and with respect to God, all the power of creatures is but weakness.

God is wise; and with respect to God, all human wisdom is ignorance.

God is provident; and with respect to God, all human foresight is ridiculous.

God is just; and with respect to God, all human justice is defective: *And in His angels He found wickedness.*[5]

[1] "Deus meus es tu, quoniam bonorum meorum non eges."—*Ps.* xv. 2.

[2] "Tu autem idem ipse es, et anni tui non deficient."—*Ps.* ci. 28.

[3] "Quo ibo a spiritu tuo? et quo a facie tua fugiam? si ascendero in cœlum, tu illic es; si descendero in infernum, ades."—*Ps.* cxxxviii. 7.

[4] "Ego Dominus, et non mutor."—*Mal.* iii. 6.

[5] "Et in Angelis suis reperit pravitatem."—*Job*, iv. 18.

God is merciful; and with respect to God, all human clemency is imperfect.

God is holy; in comparison with God, all human sanctity, though it be heroic, falls short in an infinite degree: *None is good but God alone.*[1]

God is beauty itself; yes, how beautiful is God! and with respect to God, all human beauty is deformity.

God is brightness itself; and with respect to God, all human brightness, even that of the sun, is darkness.

God is rich; and with respect to God, all human riches is poverty.

God is all things; and with respect to God, the highest, the most sublime, the most admirable of created things, and even if they were all united in one, are as nothing: *All men are as nothing before Thee.*[2] He is, therefore, worthy of love; and, oh, of how much! Ah, God is worthy of so much love, that all the angels, and all the saints of Paradise, do nothing but love God, and they will throughout all eternity be occupied only in loving him; and in this love of God, they are and will be always happy.

Ah, God is so worthy of love, that he is obliged to love himself with an infinite love; and in this same love, so necessary, but at the same time so delightful, which God bears to himself, consists his beatitude! And shall we not love him?

How did the saints love him?

St. Francis Xavier used to loosen his clothes and throw himself on the ground, not being able to resist the impulse of holy love.

St. Stanislaus Kostka bared his breast, and used to run to fountains to refresh himself with the water.

The heart of St. Philip Neri became sensibly enlarged by the force of holy love.

[1] "Nemo bonus, nisi solus Deus."—*Luke,* xviii. 19.

[2] "Tanquam nihilum ante te."—*Ps.* xxxviii. 6.

St. Francis de Sales said, that if he knew that there was the smallest fibre in his heart that was not saturated with divine love, he would tear it out at once and cast it far from him.

And St. Catharine of Sienna, St. Teresa, St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi, and other souls like them, were often in transports, and ravished as it were through the violence of the holy love of God; and St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi, not satisfied with loving him so much herself, sometimes went about her convent, in order to give vent to her love, crying with a loud voice, "Love is not loved; Love is not loved." And shall we then not love him?

Do you know why we do not love him? It is because we know him so little. The saints, who knew him better than we do, loved him so much. Let us then also try to know him a little more.

Let us meditate from time to time on his divine attributes, on his divine perfections; let us at least, from time to time, raise our minds by a simple glance to him in the way I have here proposed, and our hearts will also become inflamed with this holy divine love.

It is condescension in so great a God, that he should permit himself to be loved by such vile creatures as we are; and it is also his sweet commandment.

When God gave Moses his law on the top of Mount Sinai, before giving him any other precept, he taught him this: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole strength.*[1] And he enjoined him first of all to imprint well these words in his own heart: *And these words shall be in thy heart;*[2] and afterwards to promulgate them with ardor among the children of Israel: *And thou shalt tell them to*

[1] "Diliges Dominum Deum tuum ex toto corde tuo, et ex tota anima tua, et ex tota fortitudine tua."—*Deut.* vi. 5.

[2] "Eruntque verba hæc . . . in corde tuo."—*Ibid.* vi. 6.

thy children.[1] Let us also love him as he deserves; let us fulfil perfectly this his precept, which is at the same time so noble and so sweet; which is in fine the first and greatest precept of the law: *This is the greatest and the first commandment.*[2] And let us live and die in the fulfilment of this precept.

II.

How much God desires to be Loved by Us.

Our good God, because he loves us much, desires to be loved much by us; and therefore he has not only called us to love him by so many invitations repeated again and again in the Holy Scriptures, and by so many blessings both general and individual, but he would also oblige us to love him by an express commandment; and he threatens those with hell who love him not; while to those who do love him he promises Paradise.

His will is, that no one be lost, but that all attain salvation, as St. Peter and St. Paul most clearly teach: *Who will have all men to be saved.*[3] *He dealeth patiently for your sake, not willing that any should perish, but that all should return to penance.*[4] But since God wishes all men to be saved, why has he created hell? He did so, not to see us damned, but in order to be loved by us. If he had not created hell, who in the whole world would love him? If with hell, existing as it really does, the greater part of men choose rather to be damned than to love Almighty God, who, I repeat, would love him were there no hell? And therefore the Lord threatens those who will not love him with an eternal punishment; so that they who will not

[1] "Et narrabis ea filiis tuis."—*Ibid.* vi. 7.

[2] "Hoc est maximum et primum mandatum."—*Matt.* xxii. 38.

[3] "Omnes homines vult salvos fieri."—1 *Tim.* ii. 4.

[4] "Patienter agit propter vos, nolens aliquos perire, sed omnes ad pœnitentiam reverti."—2 *Peter,* iii. 9.

love him out of love may at least love him by force, being constrained to do so through fear of falling into hell.

O God, how fortunate and honored would that man esteem himself to whom his king should say, "Love me because I love you"! An earthly monarch would take good care not to humble himself to such an extent as to ask one of his subjects for his love; but God, who is infinite goodness, the Lord of all, almighty, all-wise, in a word, God, who merits an infinite love, God, who has enriched us with spiritual and temporal gifts, does not disdain to ask of us our love. He exhorts us and commands us to love him, and he cannot obtain it. What does he ask of each one of us but to be loved? *What doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but that thou fear the Lord thy God . . . and love Him?*[1] It was for this end that the Son of God came to converse with us even upon earth, as he himself said: *I am come to cast fire on the earth; and what will I but that it be kindled?*[2] Observe these last words,—*and what will I but that it be kindled?* As if it were that a God, who possesses in himself infinite happiness, could not be happy without seeing himself loved by us: "As if," says St. Thomas, "He could not be happy without thee."[3]

We cannot doubt, then, that God loves us, and loves us exceedingly; and because he loves us exceedingly, he wishes us to love him with our whole heart: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart.*[4] And then he adds: *And these words shall be in thy heart . . . and thou shalt meditate upon them sitting in thy house, and walking on thy journey, sleeping and rising: and thou shalt bind them as a*

[1] "Quid Dominus Deus tuus petit a te, nisi ut timeas Dominum Deum tuum, et ambules in viis ejus, et diligas eum."—*Deut.* x. 12.

[2] "Ignem veni mittere in terram; et quid volo, nisi ut accendatur?"—*Luke*, xii. 49.

[3] "Quasi sine te beatus esse non posset."—*De Beatit.* c. 7.

[4] "Diliges Dominum Deum tuum ex toto corde tuo."—*Deut.* vi. 5.

sign on thy hand, and they shall be and shall move between thy eyes. And thou shalt write them in the entry and on the doors of thy house.[1] We can see in all these words how earnest is the desire which God has to be beloved by each one of us. He wishes that the injunction of loving him with our whole heart should be imprinted in our heart; and that we may never be unmindful of these words, he wishes us to meditate upon them when we are sitting at home, when we are walking abroad, when we lie down to sleep, and when we awake from it again. He wishes us to hold them in our hands bound up with some significant memento, in order that, wherever we may be, our eyes may ever rest upon them; and hence it was that the Pharisees, taking them only in their literal sense, used, as we are told by St. Matthew, to wear them inscribed on pieces of parchment, not only in their right hands, but also upon their foreheads.[2]

St. Gregory of Nyssa exclaims. "Blessed is the arrow that carries along with it into the heart the God by whom it is aimed!"[3] And what the holy Father means is this: that when God wounds the heart with an arrow of love, it acts like a flash or ray of special illumination, whereby the soul becomes cognizant of his goodness and of the love which he bears towards it, as also of the desire which he has to possess the love of that soul; whilst at the same moment he himself comes together with that arrow of his love, he who is the archer being himself also love: for, as St. John says, *God is charity.*[4] And as an arrow remains fixed in the heart which it has

[1] "Eruntque verba hæc . . . in corde tuo . . . et meditaberis in eis, sedens in domo tua, et ambulans in itinere, dormiens atque consurgens; et ligabis ea quasi signum in manu tua; eruntque et movebuntur inter oculos tuos; scribesque ea in limine et ostiis domus tuæ."—*Deut.* vi. 6–9.

[2] *Matt.* xxiii. 5.

[3] "Beata sagitta, quæ simul in cor adducit sagittarium Deum."—*In Cant.*, hom. 4.

[4] "Quoniam Deus charitas est."—1 *John*, iv. 8.

wounded, so in like manner does God, when he wounds a soul with his love, come to remain forever united with that soul which he has wounded. Let us be assured that it is God only who loves us truly. The love of parents, of friends, and of all others who profess to love us, excepting in the case of those who love us solely out of regard for God, is not a true but a self-interested love, and arises from some motive of self-love as the end for the sake of which we are loved.

Yes, O my God! I know full well that it is Thou alone who lovest me, and desirest for me every good, not for any selfish interests of Thine own, but solely out of Thine own goodness, and out of the pure affection which Thou dost bear towards me: whilst I am so ungrateful as to have caused no one so much displeasure and so much grief as I have done to Thee, who hast loved me so much. O my Jesus! do not permit me to be ungrateful to Thee any more. Thou hast loved me truly, and I wish to love Thee truly in whatever of this life may still be mine. With St. Catharine of Genoa, I say to Thee: "My Love, no more sins, no more sins;" I wish to love Thee only, and naught besides.

St. Bernard says, that a soul that truly loves God "cannot will anything but what God wills."[1] Let us pray to God to wound us with his holy love; for a soul thus wounded has neither the faculty nor the power to have a will for anything but that which God wills, and divests itself of every desire arising out of self-love. This self-spoliation, moreover, together with the giving of one's self unreservedly to God, is the arrow by which he declares that he himself is wounded by the soul; as he said to the sacred Spouse in the Canticles: *Thou hast wounded My Heart, My sister, My spouse.*[2]

How beautifully does St. Bernard express himself on

[1] "Non potest velle, nisi quod Deus vult."—*De vita solit.*

[2] "Vulnerasti cor meum, soror mea sponsa."—*Cant.* iv. 9.

this subject when he says: "Let us learn to dart our hearts at God!"[1] When a soul gives itself up wholly and unreservedly to God, it is as if it darted its own heart like a spear towards the heart of God, who declares himself to be, as it were, captivated and taken prisoner by the soul that has made over to him the gift of itself in full. This is the employment of such souls in the prayers which they offer; "they dart their hearts at God;"[2] they give themselves wholly up to God; and they are ever renewing that gift in these or similar ejaculations of love:

"My God and my All:"[3] my God, I wish for Thee, and for naught besides.

O Lord! I give myself wholly to Thee; and if I know not how to make the gift as perfect as I ought, do Thou take the management of it Thyself.

And what would I love, O my Jesus! if I love not Thee, who hast died for me?

"Draw me after Thee:"[4] my Saviour, drag me out of the mire of my sins, and draw me after Thee.

Bind me, O Lord! and fetter me with the chains of Thy love, that I may never leave Thee more.

I wish to be all Thine own. Lord, hast Thou understood me? I wish to be wholly, wholly Thine: it is for Thee to make me so.

And what would I have but Thee, my Love, my All?

Since Thou hast called me to Thy love, enable me to please Thee as Thou dost desire.

And what would I love but Thee, who art infinite goodness, deserving infinite love?

Thou hast inspired me with the desire of being wholly Thine: oh, make the work complete!

[1] Discamus jaculari corda in Deum.
[2] Jaculantur corda in Deum.
[3] Deus meus, et omnia!
[4] Trahe me post te.

And what would I have in this world but Thee, who art the Sovereign Good?

I give myself to Thee without reserve: oh, accept me, and give me the strength to be faithful unto Thee till death!

I wish to love Thee greatly in this life, that I may love Thee greatly for all eternity.

Jesus, my true, my only Love,
I wish for nought but Thee:
Behold me all Thine own, my God;
Do what Thou wilt with me.

Whoever says this little canticle from the heart causes joy in Paradise.

Blessed, in short, is that soul that can truly say, *My Beloved to me, and I to him.*[1] My God has given himself wholly to me, and I have given myself wholly to him; I am no longer my own; I belong entirely to my God. St. Bernard says that whosoever can speak thus from his heart, would most readily and willingly embrace all the pains of hell (provided that he could do so without separating himself from God) rather than behold himself, even for one single moment, separated from God: "It would be more tolerable to such a one to suffer hell than to withdraw from him."[2] Oh, what a beautiful treasure is the treasure of divine love! He who possesses it is happy indeed; let him take every care, and make use of all the means which are necessary to preserve and increase it; while he who does not yet possess it ought to employ every means in order to acquire it.

III.

Means to Acquire the Love of God.

Let us now see which are the means most suitable to acquire and preserve the love of God.

[1] "Dilectus meus mihi, et ego illi."—*Cant.* ii. 16.

[2] Tolerabilius esset gehennam tolerare, quam recedere ab illo.

I. DETACHMENT FROM CREATURES.

The first of these is the detachment of one's self from earthly affections. In a heart that is full of earth there is no room to be found for the love of God; and the more the earthly element predominates, the less does the divine love bear sway. Wherefore, he who desires to have his heart filled with divine love should study to remove out of it all that is of earth. In order to become saints, we must follow the example of St. Paul, who, that he might gain the love of Jesus Christ, despised as so much dung all the good things of this world: *I count all things as dung, that I may gain Christ.*[1] Oh, let us pray the Holy Spirit to enkindle within us his holy love; for then we too shall despise and reckon as mere vanity, smoke, and dirt all this world's riches, pleasures, honors, and distinctions, for the sake of which mankind in general involve themselves so miserably in destruction.

Ah! whenever holy love enters into the heart, it no longer regards as of any value all that the world holds in estimation: *If a man should give all the substance of his house for love, he shall despise it as nothing.*[2] St. Francis de Sales observes that when a house is in flames the goods are all thrown out of the windows; meaning to say that when the heart is on fire with divine love, a man needs not the preachings and exhortations of a spiritual father, but of his own accord sets himself to work to divest himself of the good things of this world, of its honors, of its riches, and of all earthly things, in order that he may love nothing but God. St. Catharine of Genoa used to say that she did not love God for the sake of his

[1] "Omnia detrimentum feci et arbitror ut stercora, ut Christum lucrifaciam."—*Phil.* iii. 8.

[2] "Si dederit homo omnem substantiam domus suæ pro dilectione, quasi nihil despiciet eam."—*Cant.* viii. 7.

gifts, but that she loved the gifts of God in order that she might love him the more.

Gilbert observes that it is hard and intolerable to a heart that loves God to divide its affections between him and creatures, by loving at one and the same time God and creatures too: "Oh, how hard it is for the lover to divide his heart between Christ and the world!"[1] St. Bernard says that the divine love is, on the other hand, insolent: "Love is insolent;"[2] insolent, because God will not suffer that, in a heart which loves, there should be others to share with him in its love, wishing, as he does, to have it all for himself. Is it, then, that God claims too much, in wishing that a soul should love him, and him alone? "The Sovereign Loveliness," observes St. Bonaventure, "ought to be loved exclusively."[3] Such a one as God, whose loveliness and goodness are infinite and worthy of an infinite love, has a just claim to be alone in his possession of the love of a heart created by himself for the express purpose that it should make him the object of its love; while, in order that he might be loved exclusively, he has gone so far as to expend himself wholly for that heart, as St. Bernard says, when speaking of himself and of the love which Jesus Christ had borne towards him: "He was utterly spent for my benefit."[4] What each one of us can most truly say, when thinking of Jesus Christ, is, that for each one of us he has sacrificed all his life and all his blood, dying upon a cross, consumed by pain; and that although his death be past, he has bequeathed to us his body and his blood, his soul and his whole self in the Sacrament of the Altar, that it

[1] "Oh! quam durum est amanti animum dimidiare cum Christo et mundo!"—*Serm.* 11 *in Cant.*

[2] Amor insolens est.

[3] "Summa diligibilitas summe debet diligi."—*De* 7 *itin.* 4 d. 5 a. 1.

[4] "Totus in meos usus expensus."—*In Circ.* s. 3.

may be the meat and drink of our souls, and that we may each of us be united with himself.

Happy is the soul, as St. Gregory observes, that has arrived at a state wherein everything is intolerable that is not the God whom it exclusively loves.[1] "Whatever does not speak of the God whom it so intensely loves is intolerable." We must, then, be on our guard against setting our affections on creatures, lest they steal from us a portion of the love which God wishes to be wholly for himself. And even when such affections are right, as in the case of the affections entertained for parents or friends, we should never forget the saying of St. Philip Neri, that whatever love we entertain for creatures is so much taken away from God.

We ought, therefore, to endeavor to make ourselves "gardens enclosed," as the Sacred Spouse in the Canticles was styled by her Lord: *My Spouse is a garden enclosed.*[2] The title of "a garden enclosed" applies to the soul that keeps itself closed against the entrance of all mere earthly affections. Whenever, therefore, any creature seeks to enter and to seize a portion of our heart, we must utterly refuse it admission; and then we ought to turn to Jesus Christ, and say to him: My Jesus, Thou alone art sufficient for me. I do not wish to love aught but Thee: "Thou art the God of my heart; and God is my portion forever."[3] My God, Thou alone art the Lord of my heart, and my only love. And on this account let us not cease to pray continually to God, that he would bestow upon us the gift of his pure love; since, as St. Francis de Sales observes, "The pure love of God consumes all that is not God, to transform everything into itself."

[1] "Intolerabile æstimat quidquid non sonat Deum, quem intus amat."—*Moral.* l. 7, c. 6.

[2] "Hortus conclusus, soror mea sponsa."—*Cant.* iv. 12.

[3] "Deus cordis mei, et pars mea Deus in æternum."—*Ps.* lxxii. 26.

2. MEDITATION ON THE PASSION.

Meditation on the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ is the second means for acquiring divine love. On this subject the reader can refer to my book, which was published a short time since, entitled *Reflections on the Passion of Jesus Christ*, in which he will find a detailed examination of the sufferings that our Saviour underwent in his Passion. As for the rest, it is certain that the fact of Jesus Christ being so little loved in the world arises from the negligence and ingratitude of mankind, and from not considering, at least occasionally, how much he has suffered for us, and the love wherewith he suffered for us. "To mankind it has appeared foolish," [1] as St. Gregory observes, "that God should die for us." It seems folly, says the Saint, that God should have been willing to die in order to save us miserable slaves: nevertheless, it is of faith that he has done so. "He has loved us, and delivered himself for us." [2] And he has willed to shed all his blood, in order to wash away our sins therewith: *He hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own Blood.*[3]

St. Bonaventure says, "My God, so much hast Thou loved me, that through Thy love for me, Thou dost seem to have gone so far as even to have hated Thyself." [4] Besides, he has yet further willed that he himself should be our food in Holy Communion. And here the angelic doctor St. Thomas, speaking of this Most Holy Sacrament, says that God has so humbled himself with us,

[1] "Stultum hominibus visum est, ut pro hominibus Auctor vitæ moreretur."—*In Ev. hom.* 6.

[2] "Dilexit nos, et tradidit semetipsum pro nobis."—*Eph.* v. 2.

[3] "Dilexit nos, et lavit nos a peccatis nostris in sanguine suo."—*Apoc.* i. 5.

[4] "Tantum me diligis, ut te pro me odisse videaris."—*Stim. div. am.* p. 2, c. 2.

that it is as if he were our servant, and each of us his God: "as though He were their servant, and each of them were God's God." [1]

Hence it is that the Apostle says, *For the charity of Christ presseth us.*[2] St. Paul says that the love which Jesus Christ has borne us constrains us, and in a certain sense forces us, to love him. O my God! what is there that men will not do out of love for some creature on which they have set their affections! And how little is their love for One who is, moreover, God; whose goodness and loveliness are infinite, and who has even gone so far as to die upon a cross for each one of us! Ah, let us all follow the example of the Apostle, who said, *But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.*[3] So spoke the holy Apostle; and what greater glory can I hope for in the world than that of having had a God to sacrifice his blood and life, out of his love for me?

And this is what every one who has faith must say, and if he has faith, how will it be possible for him to love any other than God? O my God! how can a soul, contemplating Jesus crucified, as, suspended on three nails, he hangs from those same wounds of his in his hands and feet, and dies of sheer anguish, through his love for us, not perceive itself drawn, and as it were constrained, to love him with all its powers?

Let a soul be as cold as it can be in the divine love; if it have faith, I know not how it be possible for it not to perceive itself urged to love Jesus Christ, or even the most hasty consideration of what the Holy Scriptures tell us of the love which he has manifested towards us in his Passion, and in the Most Holy Sacrament of the

[1] Quasi esset servus eorum, et quilibet eorum esset Dei Deus.

[2] "Charitas Christi urget nos."—2 *Cor.* v. 14.

[3] "Mihi autem absit gloriari, nisi in cruce Domini nostri Jesu Christi."—*Gal.* vi. 14.

Altar. As regards his Passion, we read in Isaias: *Surely He hath borne our infirmities, and carried our sorrows;* and in the verse that follows: *But He was wounded for our iniquities; He was bruised for our sins.*[1] So that it is of faith that Jesus Christ has willed to suffer in his own person pains and afflictions, to set free from them ourselves, to whom they were justly due. And why is it that he has done so, if it be not for the love which he has borne towards us? *Christ hath loved us, and hath delivered himself for us,*[2] as St. Paul says. And St. John says: *Who hath loved us and washed us from our sins with His own Blood.*[3] While with respect to the Sacrament of the Eucharist, it was Jesus himself who said to us all, when he instituted it, *Take ye, and eat; this is My Body.*[4] And in another passage: *He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood abideth in Me, and I in him.*[5] How can any one who has faith read this without feeling himself, as it were, forced to love his Redeemer, who, after having sacrificed his blood and life out of love for him, has left him his own body in the Sacrament of the Altar, to be the food of his soul, and the means of uniting him wholly to himself in Holy Communion?

We may add one more brief reflection on the Passion of Jesus Christ. He shows himself to us on the cross pierced by three nails, with blood issuing from every pore, and agonizing in the pangs of death. I ask, why is it that Jesus manifests himself to us in such a pitiable

[1] "Vere languores nostros ipse tulit, et dolores nostros ipse portavit. . . . Vulneratus est propter iniquitates nostras, attritus est propter scelera nostra."—*Isa.* liii. 4.

[2] "Christus dilexit nos, et tradidit semetipsum pro nobis."—*Eph.* v. 2.

[3] "Dilexit nos et lavit nos a peccatis nostris in sanguine suo."—*Apoc.* i. 5.

[4] "Accipite et manducate; hoc est corpus meum."—1 *Cor.* xi. 24.

[5] "Qui manducat meam carnem et bibit meum sanguinem, in me manet, et ego in illo."—*John,* vi. 57.

condition? Is it, perchance, that we may compassionate him? No: it is not so much to gain our compassion, as to become the object of our love, that he has reduced himself to so miserable a state. It ought to have been a motive more than sufficient to secure our love, had he given us to know that his love for us is from all eternity: *I have loved thee with an everlasting love.*[1] But seeing that this was not enough for our lukewarmness, the Lord, in order to move us to love him according to his desires, has willed thus to give us indeed a practical demonstration of the love which he bore towards us, by making us behold him, covered with wounds, die of anguish, through his love for us, that by means of his sufferings we might understand the immensity and tenderness of the love which he cherishes towards us; as it is so well expressed in these words of St. Paul: *He has loved us, and delivered Himself for us.*[2]

3. CONFORMITY TO THE WILL OF GOD.

The third means of gaining a perfect love of God is the bringing of our own will into uniformity with the divine will in all things. St. Bernard says that he who loves God perfectly "cannot will anything excepting that which God wills."[3] There are many who profess themselves to be thoroughly resigned to whatever God wills; but when afterwards any adverse circumstance or any troublesome infirmity befalls them, they cannot retain their peace of mind. It is not so with souls that are in a state of true uniformity. They say, "Thus it pleases, or thus it has pleased Him whom I love;" and they are immediately at rest. "To holy love," says St. Bonaventure, "all things are sweet."[4] These souls know

[1] "In charitate perpetua dilexi te."—*Jer.* xxxi. 3.

[2] "Dilexit nos, et tradidit semetipsum pro nobis."—*Eph.* v. 2.

[3] "Non potest velle, nisi quod Deus vult."—*De vita solit.*

[4] Amori sancto omnia dulcia sunt.

that everything that happens in the world is either ordered or permitted by God; consequently, in all that comes to pass, they humbly bow down their head and live contented with what God assigns. And although it be frequently the case that he does not will that those who persecute and injure us should do so, yet he nevertheless wills for wise ends that we should suffer with patience the persecution or the injury by which we are afflicted.

St. Catharine of Genoa used to say, "If God had placed me in the depths of hell, I would sincerely have said, It is good for us to be here."[1] I would have said, It is enough for me that I am here by the will of Him whom I love, who loves me more than all others do, and knows what is best for me. Sweet is the repose of those who repose in the arms of the divine will.

St. Teresa says: "The grand thing to be acquired by one who practises the habit of prayer is the conformity of his own will to the divine; for in that consists the highest perfection."[2] Wherefore we must be ever repeating to God that prayer of David: *Teach me to do Thy will.*[3] Lord, since Thou dost wish me to be saved, teach me ever to do Thy will. The most perfect act of love which a soul can perform towards God is that of St. Paul, when, on his conversion, he said, *Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?*[4] Lord, tell me what Thou dost desire of me, for I am ready to do it. This act is worth more than a thousand fasts and a thousand disciplines. This ought to be the object of all our works, desires, and prayers,—the accomplishment of the divine will. For this we ought to pray our divine Mother, our patron saints and guardian angels, to obtain for us the grace to fulfil the will of God.

[1] "Bonum est nos hic esse."—*Matt.* xvii. 4.

[2] *Interior Castle*, d. 2, ch. 1.

[3] "Doce me facere voluntatem tuam."—*Ps.* cxlii. 10.

[4] "Domine, quid me vis facere?"—*Acts*, ix. 6.

And whenever things that are opposed to our self-love befall us, we may then, by one act of resignation, gain treasures of merit. Let us accustom ourselves on such occasions to repeat those which Jesus himself has, by his own example, taught us: *The chalice which My Father hath given Me shall I not drink it?*[1] or, again, *Yea, Father, for so hath it seemed good in Thy sight.*[2] Lord, thus it hath pleased Thee, and thus it pleases me also. Or, again, with holy Job, let us say, *As it hath pleased Thee, Lord, so is it done; blessed be the name of the Lord.*[3] The venerable Father Avila used to say that a single "Blessed be God," under adverse circumstances, is worth more than a thousand thanksgivings when things go smoothly. And here we may say again, what has already been said above, beautiful is the repose of those who repose themselves in the arms of the will of God; for then will the declaration of the Holy Spirit be fulfilled in them: *Whatsoever shall befall the just man, it shall not make him sad.*[4]

4. MENTAL PRAYER.

The fourth means for becoming enamoured of God is mental prayer. The eternal truths are not discernible by the natural eye, like the things that are visible in this world. They are to be discerned solely by means of meditation and contemplation. Therefore, unless we pause for a certain length of time, in order to consider the eternal truths, and more especially our obligation to love God, on account of his being so deserving of our love, as also for the great blessings which he has conferred upon us and the love which he has borne us, we

[1] "Calicem quem dedit mihi Pater, non bibam illum?"—*John*, xviii. 11.

[2] "Ita, Pater, quoniam sic fuit placitum ante te."—*Matt.* xi. 26.

[3] "Sicut Domino placuit, ita factum est."—*Job*, i. 21.

[4] "Non contristabit justum quidquid ei acciderit."—*Prov.* xii. 21.

shall hardly loose ourselves from the love of creatures, to fix our whole love on God. It is in the time of prayer that God gives us to understand the worthlessness of earthly things, and the value of the good things of heaven; and then it is that he inflames with his love those hearts which do not offer resistance to his calls.

There are many, however, who complain that they go to prayer and do not find God: the reason of which is, that they carry with them a heart full of earth. Detach the heart from creatures, says St. Teresa, seek God and you will find him. *The Lord is good to the soul that seeketh Him.*[1] Therefore to find God in prayer, the soul must be stripped of its love for the things of earth, and then God will speak to it: *I will lead her into the wilderness and I will speak to her heart.*[2] But in order to find God, the solitude of the body, as St. Gregory observes, is not enough; that of the heart is necessary too. The Lord one day said to St. Teresa: "I would willingly speak to many souls; but the world makes such a noise in their heart that My voice cannot make itself heard." Ah! when a detached soul is engaged in prayer, truly does God speak to it and make it understand the love which he has borne it; and then the soul, as a certain author says, burning with holy love, speaks not; but in that silence, oh, how much does it say! The silence of charity, observes the same writer, says more to God than could be said by the utmost powers of human eloquence: each sigh that it utters is a manifestation of its whole interior. It then seems as if it could not repeat often enough, *My Beloved to me, and I to him.*[3]

[1] "Bonus est Dominus . . . animæ quærenti illum."—*Lam.* iii. 25.
[2] "Ducam eam in solitudinem, et loquar ad cor ejus."—*Os.* ii. 14.
[3] "Dilectus meus mihi, et ego illi."—*Cant.* ii. 16.

5. PRAYER.

The fifth means of attaining to a high degree of divine love is prayer. We are poor in all things; but if we pray, we are rich in all things; for God has promised to grant the prayer of him who prays to him. He says: *Ask and it shall be given to you.*[1] What greater love can one friend show towards another than to say to him, Ask of me what you will, and I will give it you? This is what the Lord says to each one of us. God is Lord of all things. He promises to give us as much as we ask him for; if, then, we are poor, the fault is our own, because we do not ask him for the graces of which we stand in need. And it is on this account that mental prayer is morally necessary for all; inasmuch as when prayer is laid aside, while we are involved in this world's cares, we pay but little attention to the soul; but when we practise it we discover the wants of the soul, and then ask for the corresponding graces and obtain them.

The whole life of the saints has been one of meditation and prayer; and all the graces by means of which they have become saints have been received by them in answer to their prayers. If, therefore, we would be saved and become saints, we ought ever to stand at the gates of the divine mercy to beg and pray for, as an alms, all that we stand in need of. We need humility: let us ask for it and we shall be humble. We need patience under tribulations: let us ask for it and we shall be patient. The divine love is what we desire: let us ask for it, and we shall obtain it. *Ask and it shall be given you*,[2] is God's promise, which cannot fail. And Jesus Christ, in order to inspire us with the greater confidence in our prayers, has promised us that whatever

[1] "Petite, et dabitur vobis."—*Matt.* vii. 7.

[2] Petite, et dabitur vobis.

be the graces which we shall ask of the Father in his name, for the sake of either his love or his merits, the Father will give us them all: *Amen, amen, I say to you, if you ask the Father anything in My name He will give it you.*[1] And in another place he says: Whatsoever ye shall ask of me myself in my name, through my merits, I will grant it: *If you shall ask me anything in my name, that I will do.*[2] Yes; because it is of faith that whatever God can do can also be done by Jesus Christ, who is his Son.

Prayer of St. Bonaventure to Jesus Christ, to obtain His Holy Love.

Most sweet Jesus, pierce the interior of my soul with the sweet wound of Thy love, that my soul may ever languish and be dissolved with Thy love and with the desire of possessing Thee, and long to quit this life, that it may come to be perfectly united with Thee in a blessed eternity. Grant that my soul may ever thirst after Thee, speak only to Thee, find Thee, and do all for Thy glory. Grant that my heart may be ever fixed on Thee who art my only hope, my riches, my peace, my refuge, my confidence, my treasure, and my inheritance,

Prayer to the Ever-blessed Virgin, to obtain the Love of Jesus and a Happy Death.

O Mary! thou who so much desirest to see Jesus loved, if thou lovest me this is the favor that I now ask of thee, to obtain for me a great love for Jesus Christ. Thou obtainest from thy Son whatever thou pleasest; pray, then, for me, and console me. Obtain for me a great love for thee, who of all creatures art the most loving and beloved of God. And through that grief which thou didst suffer on Calvary, when thou didst behold Jesus expire on the cross, obtain for me a happy death, that by loving Jesus and thee, my Mother, I may come to love you both forever in heaven.

[1] "Amen, amen dico vobis: si quid petieritis Patrem in nomine meo, dabit vobis."—*John*, xvi. 23.

[2] "Si quid petieritis me in nomine meo, hoc faciam."—*John*, xiv. 14.

HYMN.

On the Love of God.

By Monsignore Falcoja.

O God of loveliness!
  O Lord of Heaven above!
How worthy to possess
  My heart's devoted love!
So sweet Thy countenance,
  So gracious to behold,
That one, one only glance
  To me were bliss untold.

Thou art blest Three in One,
  Yet undivided still;
Thou art that One alone
  Whose love my heart can fill.
The heavens, the earth below,
  Were fashioned by Thy Word;
How amiable art Thou,
  My ever-dearest Lord!

To think Thou art my God,—
  O thought for ever blest!—
My heart has overflowed
  With joy within my breast.
My soul so full of bliss
  Is plunged, as in a sea,
Deep in the sweet abyss
  Of holy charity.

No object here below
  Awakens my desire;
No suffering nor woe
  Can grief or pain inspire.
The world I could despise,
  Though it were all of gold;
Thee only do I prize,
  O mine of wealth untold!

My God, my dearest Love!
My God for evermore!
My soul's true life above!
Thee does my heart adore.
No love on earth I own,
For nought on earth I sigh;
For love of Thee alone
I faint away, I die.

Were hearts as countless mine
As sands upon the shore,
All should in choir combine
To love Thee evermore.
And every heart should yearn
With tenderest desire,
And in my bosom burn
With flames of holiest fire.

O Loveliness supreme,
And Beauty infinite!
O ever-flowing stream,
And ocean of delight!
O Life by which I live,
My truest life above!
To Thee alone I give
My undivided love.

Death even, for Thy sake
I count to be no loss;
And sweet repose I take,
For Thee, on every cross.
Could I but love Thee still
In the dark pit of hell,
E'en there, to do Thy will,
I should not fear to dwell.

II. *THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.*

The Power of the Passion of Jesus Christ to Enkindle the Divine Love in every Heart.

I.

What the Passion of Jesus Christ has Done for God and for Us.

Father Balthassar Alvarez, a great servant of God, used to say that we must not think we have made any progress in the way of God until we have come to keep Jesus crucified ever in our heart. And St. Francis de Sales said that "the love which is not the offspring of the Passion is feeble." Yes, because we cannot have a more powerful motive for loving God than the Passion of Jesus Christ, by which we know that the Eternal Father, to manifest to us his exceeding love for us, was pleased to send his only begotten Son upon earth to die for us sinners. Whence the Apostle says that God, through the excess of love wherewith he loved us, willed that the death of his Son should convey life to us: *For His exceeding charity wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together in Christ.*[1] And this was precisely the expression used by Moses and Elias on Mount Tabor, in speaking of the Passion of Jesus Christ. They did not know how to give it any other appellation than an excess of love: *And they spoke of His excess, which He should consummate in Jerusalem.*[2]

When our Saviour came into the world, the shepherds

[1] "Propter nimiam charitatem suam, qua dilexit nos, cum essemus mortui peccatis, convivificavit nos in Christo."—*Ephes.* ii. 4.

[2] "Et dicebant excessum ejus, quem completurus erat in Jerusalem."—*Luke,* ix. 31.

heard the angels singing, *Glory to God in the highest.*[1] But the humiliation of the Son of God in becoming man, through his love for man, might have seemed rather to obscure than to manifest the divine glory; but no; there was no means by which the glory of God could have been better manifested to the world than by Jesus Christ dying for the salvation of mankind, since the Passion of Jesus Christ has made us know how great is the mercy of God, in that a God was willing to die to save sinners, and to die, moreover, by a death so painful and ignominious. St. John Chrysostom says that the Passion of Jesus Christ was not an ordinary suffering, nor his death a simple death like that of other men.[2]

It has made us know the divine *wisdom.* Had our Redeemer been merely God, he could not have made satisfaction for man; for God could not make satisfaction to himself in place of man; nor could God make satisfaction by means of suffering, being impassible. On the other hand, had he been merely man, man could not have made satisfaction for the grievous injury done by him to the divine majesty. What, then, did God do? He sent his own very Son, true God with the Father, to take human flesh, that so as man he might by his death pay the debt due to the divine justice, and as God might make to it full satisfaction.

It has, moreover, made us know how great is the divine *justice.* St. John Chrysostom says that God reveals to us the greatness of his justice, not so much by hell in which he punishes sinners, as by the sight of Jesus on the cross; since in hell creatures are punished for the sins of their own, but on the cross we behold a God cruelly treated in order to make satisfaction for the sins of men. What obligation had Jesus Christ to die for us? *He was offered*

[1] "Gloria in altissimis Deo."—*Luke,* ii. 14.

[2] "Non passio communis, non mors simplex, morti similis."—*De Pass.* s. 6.

because it was His own will.[1] He might have justly abandoned man to his perdition; but his love for us would not let him see us lost; wherefore he chose to give himself up to so painful a death in order to obtain for us salvation: *He hath loved us, and delivered Himself up for us.*[2]

From all eternity he had loved man: *I have loved thee with an everlasting love.*[3] But then, seeing that his justice obliged him to condemn him, and to keep him at a distance separated from himself in hell, his mercy urged him to find out a way by which he might be able to save him. But how? By making satisfaction himself to the divine justice by his own death. And consequently he willed that there should be affixed to the cross whereon he died the sentence of condemnation to eternal death which man had merited, in order that it might remain there cancelled in his blood. *Blotting out the writing of the decree that was against us, which was contrary to us, He hath taken the same out of the way, fastening it to the cross.*[4] And thus, through the merits of his own blood, he pardons all our sins: *Forgiving you all offences.*[5] And at the same time he spoiled the devils of the rights they had acquired over us, carrying along with him in triumph as well our enemies as ourselves, who were their prey. *And despoiling the principalities and powers, He hath exposed them confidently in open show, triumphing over them in Himself.*[6] On which Theophylact comments, "As a conqueror in

[1] "Oblatus est, quia ipse voluit."—*Isa.* liii. 7.

[2] "Dilexit nos, et tradidit semetipsum pro nobis."—*Eph.* v. 2.

[3] "In charitate perpetua dilexi te."—*Jer.* xxxi. 3.

[4] "Delens quod adversus nos erat chirographum decreti, quod erat contrarium nobis, et ipsum tulit de medio, affigens illud cruci."—*Col.* ii. 14.

[5] "Donans vobis omnia delicta."—*Col.* ii. 13.

[6] "Et expolians principatus et potestates, traduxit eos confidenter palam triumphans in semetipso."—*Col.* ii. 15.

triumph, carrying with him the booty and the enemy."[1]

Hence, when satisfying the divine justice on the cross, Jesus Christ speaks but of mercy. He prays his Father to have mercy on the very Jews who had contrived his death, and on his murderers who were putting him to death: *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*[2] While he was on the cross, instead of punishing the two thieves, who had just before reviled him,—*And they that were crucified with Him reviled Him,*[3]—when he heard one asking for mercy,—*Lord, remember me when Thou shalt come into Thy kingdom,*[4]—overflowing with mercy, he promises him Paradise that very day: *This day thou shalt be with me in Paradise.*[5] Then, before he expired, he gave to us, in the person of John, his own mother to be our mother: *He saith to the disciple, Behold thy mother.*[6] There upon the cross he declares himself content in having done everything to obtain salvation for us, and he makes perfect the sacrifice by his death: *Afterwards Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, . . . said, It is consummated; and bowing His head, He gave up the ghost.*[7]

And behold, by the death of Jesus Christ, man is set free from sin and from the power of the devil; and, moreover, is raised to grace, and to a greater degree of grace, than Adam lost: *And where sin abounded*, says St. Paul,

[1] Quasi victor ac triumphator circumvehens secum prædam et hostes in triumphum.

[2] "Pater, dimitte illis; non enim sciunt quid faciunt."—*Luke*, xxiii. 34.

[3] "Et qui cum eo crucifixi erant, convitiabantur ei."—*Mark*, xv. 32.

[4] "Domine, memento mei, cum veneris in regnum tuum."—*Luke*, xxiii. 42.

[5] "Hodie mecum eris in paradiso."—*Luke*, xxiii. 43.

[6] "Dixit discipulo: Ecce Mater tua."—*John*, xix. 27.

[7] "Postea, sciens Jesus quia omnia consummata sunt . . . dixit: Consummatum est. Et inclinato capite, tradidit spiritum."—*John*, xix. 28.

grace did more abound.[1] It remains therefore for us, writes the Apostle, to have frequent recourse with all confidence to this throne of grace, which Jesus crucified exactly is, in order to receive from his mercy the grace of salvation, together with aid to overcome the temptations of the world and of hell! *Let us go therefore with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid.*[2]

Ah, my Jesus, I love Thee above all things, and whom would I wish to love if I love not thee, who art infinite goodness, and who hast died for me? Would that I could die of grief every time I think how I had driven Thee away from my soul by my sins, and separated myself from Thee, who art my only good, and who hast loved me so much. *Who shall separate us from the charity of Christ?*[3] It is sin only that can separate me from Thee. But I hope, in the blood Thou hast shed for me, that Thou wilt never allow me to separate myself from Thy love, and to lose Thy grace, which I prize more than every other good. I give myself wholly to Thee. Do Thou accept me, and draw all my affections to Thyself, that so I may love none but Thee.

II.

What the Passion of Jesus Christ Requires of Us.

Does Jesus Christ, perhaps, claim too much in wishing us to give ourselves wholly to him, after he has given to us all his blood and his life, in dying for us upon the cross? *The charity of Christ presseth us.*[4] Let

[1] "Ubi autem abundavit delictum, superabundavit gratia."—*Rom.* v. 20.

[2] "Adeamus ergo cum fiducia ad thronum gratiæ, ut misericordiam consequamur, et gratiam inveniamus in auxilio opportuno."—*Heb.* iv. 16.

[3] "Quis enim nos separabit a charitate Christi?"—*Rom.* viii. 35.

[4] "Charitas enim Christi urget nos."—2 *Cor.* v. 14.

us hear what St. Francis de Sales says upon these words: "To know that Jesus has loved us unto death, and that the death of the cross, is not this to feel our hearts constrained by a violence which is the stronger in proportion to its loveliness?" And then he adds, "My Jesus gives himself all to me, and I give myself all to him. On his bosom will I live and die. Neither death nor life shall ever separate me from him."[1]

It was for this end, says St. Paul, that Jesus Christ died, that each of us should no longer live to the world nor to himself, but to Him alone who has given himself wholly to us. *And Christ died for all, that they who live may not now live to themselves, but unto Him who died for them.*[2] He who lives to the world seeks to please the world; he who lives to himself seeks to please himself; but he who lives to Jesus Christ seeks only to please Jesus Christ, and fears only to displease him. His only joy is to see him loved; his only sorrow, to see him despised. This is to live to Jesus Christ; and this is what he claims from each one of us. I repeat, does he claim too much from us, after having given us his blood and his life?

Wherefore, then, O my God! do we employ our affections in loving creatures, relatives, friends, the great ones of the world, who have never suffered for us scourges, thorns, or nails, nor shed one drop of blood for us; and not in loving a God, who for love of us came down from heaven and was made man, and has shed all his blood for us in the midst of torments, and finally died of grief upon a cross, in order to win to himself our hearts! Moreover, in order to unite himself more closely to us, he has left himself, after his death, upon our altars, where he makes himself one with us, that we

[1] *Love of God*, book vii. ch. 8.

[2] "Pro omnibus mortuus est Christus, ut et qui vivunt, jam non sibi vivant, sed ei qui pro ipsis mortuus est."—2 *Cor.* v. 15.

might understand how burning is the love wherewith he loves us? "He hath mingled himself with us," exclaims St. John Chrysostom, "that we may be one and the same thing: for this is the desire of those who ardently love."[1] And St. Francis de Sales, speaking of the Holy Communion, adds: "There is no action in which we can think of our Saviour as more tender or more loving than this, in which he, as it were, annihilates himself, and reduces himself to food, in order to unite himself to the hearts of his faithful."

But how comes it, O Lord! that I, after having been loved by Thee to such an excess, have had the heart to despise Thee? According to Thy just reproach, *I have nourished and brought up children, and they have despised me.*[2] I have dared to turn my back upon Thee, in order to gratify my senses. *Thou hast cast me behind Thy back.*[3] I have dared to drive Thee from my soul. *The wicked have said to God, Depart from us.*[4] I have dared to afflict that heart of Thine which has loved me so much. And what, then, am I now to do? Ought I to be distrustful of Thy mercy? I curse the days wherein I have dishonored Thee. Oh, would that I had died a thousand times, O my Saviour, rather than that I had ever offended Thee! O Lamb of God! Thou hast bled to death upon the cross to wash away our sins in Thy blood. O sinners! what would you not pay on the day of judgment for one drop of the blood of this Lamb? O my Jesus! have pity on me, and pardon me; but Thou knowest my weakness; take, then, my will, that it may never more rebel against Thee. Expel from me all love that is not for Thee. I choose Thee alone for my treasure

[1] "Semetipsum nobis immiscuit, ut unum quid simus; ardenter enim amantium hoc est."—*Ad pop. Ant. hom.* 61.

[2] "Filios enutrivi et exaltavi; ipsi autem spreverunt me."—*Is.* i. 2.

[3] "Projecisti me post corpus tuum."—*Ezek.* xxiii. 35.

[4] "Qui dixerunt Deo: Recede a nobis."—*Job*, xxi. 14.

and my only good. Thou art sufficient for me; and I desire no other good apart from Thee. *The God of my heart, and God is my portion forever.*[1]

O little sheep, beloved of God (so used St. Teresa to call the Blessed Virgin), who art the Mother of the divine Lamb, recommend me to thy Son. Thou, after Jesus, art my hope; for thou art the hope of sinners. To thy hands I intrust my eternal salvation. *Spes nostra, salve.*

III.

A Sweet Entertainment for Souls that Love God, at the Sight of Jesus Crucified.

I. SUFFERINGS OF JESUS ON THE CROSS.

Jesus on the cross! O stupendous sight for heaven and earth of mercy and of love! To see the Son of God dying through pain upon a gibbet of infamy, condemned as a malefactor to so bitter and shameful a death, in order to save sinful men from the penalty that was due to them! This sight has ever been, and will always be, the subject of the contemplation of the saints, and has led them willingly to renounce all the goods of the earth, and to embrace with great courage sufferings and death, that they might make themselves more pleasing to a God who died for love of them. The sight of Jesus despised between two thieves has made them love contempt far more than worldings have loved the honors of the world. Beholding Jesus covered with wounds upon the cross, they hold in abhorrence the pleasures of sense, and have endeavored to afflict their flesh in order to unite their sufferings to the sufferings of the Crucified. Beholding the patience of our Saviour in his death, they have joyfully accepted the most painful sicknesses, and even the most cruel torments that tyrants

[1] "Deus cordis mei, et pars mea Deus in æternum."—*Ps.* lxxii. 26.

can inflict. Lastly, from beholding the love of Jesus Christ in being willing to sacrifice his life for us in a sea of sorrows, they have sought to sacrifice to him all that they had,—possessions, children, and even light itself.

St. Paul, in speaking of the love which the Eternal Father has borne towards us, in that, when he saw us dead by reason of sin, he willed to restore life to us by sending his Son to die for us, calls it *too great* a love. *But God, who is rich in mercy for his exceeding charity wherewith He loved us, hath quickened us together in Christ.*[1] And in the same way ought we to call the love wherewith Jesus Christ has willed to die for us *too great* a love. Hence the same apostle says, *We preach Jesus Christ crucified, unto the Jews indeed a stumbling-block, and unto the Gentiles, foolishness.*[2] St. Paul says that the death of Jesus Christ appeared to the Jews a stumbling-block, because they thought that he should have appeared on earth full of worldly majesty, and not indeed as one condemned to die like a criminal upon a cross. On the other hand, to the Gentiles it seemed a folly that a God should be willing to die, and by such a death too, for his creatures. On this subject St. Laurence Justinian remarks: "We have seen Him who is wise infatuated through an excess of love."[3] We have beheld Him who is the eternal wisdom itself, the Son of God, become a fool for us, by reason of the *too great* love which he bore towards us.

And does it not seem a folly for a God, almighty and supremely happy in himself, to be willing of his own

[1] "Deus autem, qui dives est in misericordia, propter nimiam charitatem suam qua dilexit nos, et cum essemus mortui peccatis, convivificavit nos in Christo."—*Eph.* ii. 4.

[2] "Prædicamus Christum crucifixum, Judæis quidem scandalum, Gentibus autem stultitiam."—1 *Cor.* i. 23.

[3] "Vidimus sapientiam amoris nimietate infatuatam."—*Serm. de Nat. D.*

accord to subject himself to be scourged, treated as a mock king, buffeted, spit upon in the face, condemned to die as a malefactor, abandoned by all upon a cross of shame, and this to save the miserable worms he himself had created? The loving St. Francis, when he thought of this, went about the country exclaiming with tears, "Love is not loved! Love is not loved!" And hence St. Bonaventure says that he who wishes to keep his love for Jesus Christ ought always to represent him to himself hanging on the cross, and dying there for us. "Let him ever have before the eyes of his heart Christ dying upon the cross."[1]

Oh, happy is that soul which frequently sets before its eyes Jesus dying on the cross, and stops to contemplate with tenderness the pains which Jesus has suffered, and the love wherewith he offered himself to the Father, while he lay agonizing on that bed of sorrow. Souls that love God, when they find themselves more than usually harassed by temptations of the devil and by fears about their eternal salvation, derive great comfort by considering in silence and alone Jesus hanging on the cross, and shedding blood from all his wounds. At the sight of the crucifix, all desires for the goods of this world flee utterly away. From that cross exhales a heavenly breath, which causes us to forget all earthly objects, and enkindles within us a holy desire of quitting all things, in order to employ all our affections in loving that Lord who has pleased to die through love for us.

Isaias foretold that our Redeemer would be a man of sorrows. *And we have seen him . . . despised, and the most abject of men, a man of sorrows.*[2] Now let him who wishes to behold this man of sorrows, foretold by Isaias, look on Jesus Christ dying on the cross. There, nailed by his

[1] *De perf. vit.* c. 6.

[2] "Vidimus eum . . . despectum, et novissimum virorum, virum dolorum."—*Isa.* liii. 2.

hands and feet, he hangs, the whole weight of his body pressing on his wounds in all his members, which are every one of them torn and bruised. He suffers continual and excruciating pains; whichever way he turns, so far from finding relief, his pain but increases more and more, until it deprives him of life; and thus this man of sorrows is condemned by the Father to die of sheer sufferings on account of our sins.

What Christian, then, O my Jesus! knowing by faith that Thou hast died upon the cross for love of him, can live without loving Thee! Pardon me, then, O Lord! first of all, this great sin of having lived so many years in the world without loving Thee. My beloved Saviour, the thought of death fills me with dread, as being the moment when I shall give an account to Thee of all the sins that I have committed against Thee; but that blood that I see flowing from Thy wounds causes me to hope for pardon from Thee, and at the same time the grace of loving Thee for the future with my whole heart, by virtue of those merits Thou hast earned by so many pains. I give myself wholly to Thee; I will no longer be my own; I desire to do all; I desire to suffer in order to please Thee. I will die for Thee who hast died for me. I will say to Thee, with St. Francis, "May I die for love of the love of Thee, who didst vouchsafe to die for love of the love of me."[1]

2. DEATH OF JESUS.

Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit.[2] These words, uttered by Jesus Christ upon the cross when he was on the point of death, bring great comfort to the

[1] Moriar amore amoris tui, qui amore amoris mei dignatus es mori.

[2] "Pater, in manus tuas commendo spiritum meum."—*Luke*, xxiii. 46.

dying, who find themselves engaged in that last combat with hell, and are about to pass into eternity.

My beloved Jesus, I will not wait for the moment of my death to recommend my soul to Thee. From this moment I recommend it to Thee. By that blood shed for me, permit it not to be separated from Thee. Henceforth I will be Thine, and all Thine without reserve. If Thou seest that I should ever turn my back upon Thee, as I have in times past, I beseech Thee, let me die in this moment in which I hope to be in Thy grace.

In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped; I shall not be confounded forever.[1] O faithful soul! lift up thine eyes, and look at the cross of thy Redeemer, now dead for the love of thee. Say to him:

O my Jesus! in Thy flesh lacerated and torn by the scourges, the thorns, the nails, I behold the burning love Thou hast borne me, and the ingratitude I have shown Thee; but Thy blood is my hope. Wretch that I am, how often have I renounced Thy grace, and have myself willed to condemn myself to hell. What would become of me if Thou hadst not chosen to die for me? I could die of grief every time I think of having despised Thine infinite goodness, and of having of my own accord banished and separated Thee from my soul. But no; henceforth, with the help of Thy grace, I will leave all. Enough for me to be united with Thee, my God and my all!

O men, O men! how can you show such contempt for a God who has suffered so much for you? Behold him on that cross, how he sacrifices himself by death to pay for your sins, and to gain your affections. My Jesus, I will live no longer ungrateful for such goodness.

O wounds of Jesus, wound me with love! O blood of

[1] "In te, Domine, speravi; non confundar in æternum."—*Ps.* xxx. 2.

Jesus, inebriate me with love! O death of Jesus, make me die to every affection which is not for Jesus! I love Thee more than myself, O my Jesus! and there is no pain that causes me more sorrow than the thought of having so often despised Thy love. Accept me; in Thy mercy reject me not, now that I give myself to Thee without reserve.

Behold, lastly, how our Saviour, overwhelmed with sufferings upon the cross, bows his head, and breathes forth his soul: *And bowing His head, He gave up the ghost.*[1] Eternal God, I, a wretched sinner, have dishonored Thee by my evil life; but Jesus Christ, in making satisfaction for me by his death, has abundantly restored Thy honor. By the merits of Thy Son, who hast died for me, have pity on me.

O Jesus, my Saviour! I see Thee now dead on this cross. Thou speakest no more; Thou breathest no more; because Thou hast life no longer, having willed to lose it to give life to our souls. Thou hast no longer any blood; for Thou hast shed it all, by dint of torments, to wash away our sins. In one word, Thou hast abandoned Thyself to death through Thy love for us. *He hath loved us, and delivered Himself for us.*[2] "Let us consider," writes St. Francis de Sales, "this divine Saviour stretched upon the cross, as upon his altar of honor, where he is dying of love for us; but a love more painful than that very death. Ah, why, then, do we not in spirit throw ourselves upon him to die upon the cross with him, who has willed to die there for love of us? I will hold him, we ought to say, and will never let him go. I will die with him, and be burned up in the flames of his love. One and the same fire shall consume this divine Creator and his miserable creature. My Jesus is all mine, and I am all his. I will live and die upon his

[1] "Et inclinato capite, tradidit spiritum."—*John*, xix. 30.

[2] "Dilexit nos, et tradidit semetipsum pro nobis."—*Eph.* v. 2.

breast; neither death nor life shall ever separate him from me."[1]

Yes, my sweet Redeemer, I embrace with tenderness Thy pierced feet; and, filled with confidence in beholding Thee dead for love of me, I repent of having despised Thee, and I love Thee with my whole soul. At the foot of Thy cross I leave Thee my heart and my will. Do Thou Thyself nail it to this cross, so that it may never be separated from Thee, and henceforth may have no other desire than to please Thee alone.

3. FRUITS OF THE DEATH OF JESUS.

St. John writes that our Saviour, in order to make his disciples understand the death he was to suffer upon the cross, said, *And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to Myself. Now this he said, signifying what death he should die.*[2]

And, in fact, by exhibiting himself crucified and dead, how many souls has Jesus drawn to himself, so that they have left all to give themselves up entirely to his divine love. Ah, my Jesus! draw my soul to Thyself, which was one time lost; draw it by the chains of Thy love, so that it may forget the world to think of nothing else but of loving and pleasing Thee. *Draw me after Thee by the odor of Thine ointments.*[3]

O my Lord, Thou knowest my weakness and the offences that I have committed against Thee. Draw me out of the mire of my passions; draw all my affections to Thyself, so that I may attend to nothing but Thy pleasure only, O my God, most lovely! Hear me, O Lord! by the merits of Thy death, and make me wholly Thine.

[1] *Love of God*, book vii. ch. 8.

[2] "Et ego si exaltatus fuero a terra, omnia traham ad meipsum."—*John*, xii. 32.

[3] Trahe me post te in odorem unguentorum tuorum.

St. Leo tells us that he who looks with confidence upon Jesus dead upon the cross is healed of the wounds caused by his sins. "They who with faith behold the death of Christ are healed from the wounds of sin."[1] Every Christian, therefore, should keep Jesus crucified always before his eyes, and say with St. Paul, *I judged not myself to know anything among you, but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.*[2] In short, the Apostle says, that he did not desire any other knowledge in this world than that of knowing how to love Jesus Christ crucified. My beloved Saviour, to obtain for me a good death Thou hast chosen a death so full of pain and desolation! I cast myself into the arms of Thy mercy. I see that many years ago I ought to have been in hell, separated from Thee forever, for having at one time despised Thy grace; but Thou hast called me to penance, and I hope hast pardoned me; but if through my fault Thou hast not yet pardoned me, pardon me at this moment. I repent, O my Jesus! with my heart, for having turned my back upon Thee, and driven Thee from my soul. Restore me to Thy grace. But that is not enough: give me strength to love Thee with all my soul during my whole life. And when I come to the hour of my death, let me expire burning with love for Thee, and saying, my Jesus, I love Thee, I love Thee, and thus continue to love Thee for all eternity. From this moment I unite my death to Thy holy death, through which I hope for my salvation. *In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped; I shall not be confounded forever.*[3] O great mother of God, thou after Jesus art my hope. In thee, O Lady, have I hoped;

[1] "Qui intuentur fide mortem Christi, sanantur a morsibus peccatorum."—*In Jo.* tr. 12.

[2] "Non enim judicavi me scire aliquid inter vos, nisi Jesum Christum, et hunc crucifixum."—1 *Cor.* ii. 2.

[3] "In te, Domine, speravi; non confundar in æternum."—*Ps.* xxx. 2.

I shall not be confounded forever. O devout souls, when the devil wishes to make us distrustful about our salvation by the remembrance of our past sins, let us lift up our eyes to Jesus dead upon the cross, in order to deliver us from eternal death. After a God has made us know by means of the holy faith the desires he has of our salvation, having even sacrificed his life for us, if we are resolved really to love him for the remainder of our lives, cost what it may, we should be on our guard against any weakness of confidence in his mercy. After he has given us so many signs of his love for us, and of his desire for our salvation, it is a kind of sin against him not to put our whole confidence and hope in his goodness.

Full, then, of holy confidence, let us hope for every good from the hands of a God so liberal and so loving; and at the same time let us give ourselves to him without reserve, and thus pray to him: O eternal God, we are sinners, but Thou who art Almighty canst make us saints; grant that henceforth we may neglect nothing that we know to be for Thy glory, and may do all to please Thee. Blessed shall we be if we lose all to gain Thee, the infinite good. Grant that we may spend the remainder of our lives in pleasing Thee alone. Punish us as Thou wilt for our past sins, but deliver us from the chastisement of not being able to love Thee; deprive us of all things save Thyself. Thou hast loved us without reserve; we also will love Thee without reserve, O infinite Love, O infinite Good. O Virgin Mary, draw us wholly to God; thou canst do so; do so for the love that thou hast for Jesus Christ.

4. CONCLUSION.

Let us finish this little treatise with the prayer of St. Francis de Sales, saying: "O Eternal Love, my soul seeks Thee and chooses Thee for all eternity. Come, O

Holy Spirit! and kindle in our hearts the fire of Thy love. To die and to love; to die to everything, in order to live eternally for the love of Jesus. O Saviour of our souls, grant that we may sing forever and ever, Live, Jesus! I love Jesus. Live, Jesus, whom I love! I love Jesus, who liveth and reigneth forever and ever. Amen!"[1]

Ah, my Jesus! and who, seeing that Thou, the Son of God, hast willed to end Thy life by so bitter a death for love of us, will be so hard and ungrateful of heart as to be able to love anything in the world but Thee, or to prefer before Thee any of the miserable good things of earth? My God and my all, I prefer Thee before all the knowledge, all the wealth, all the riches, all the glories and hopes, and all the gifts that Thou canst bestow upon me. Thou art all my good. Thou art infinitely amiable; and how can I love any but Thee? Every gift, therefore, which is not Thyself, is not sufficient for me, does not satisfy me; Thee only do I desire, and nothing more. And if for my sins it be Thy will to punish me, punish me by the deprivation of everything, but deprive me not of Thyself. Thou alone art sufficient for me; I repeat, I desire Thee alone and nothing more.

I desire to spend the remainder of my life in loving and pleasing Thee. What have the saints not done to please Thee? They have stripped themselves of all their possessions, have renounced the greatest dignities of the world, and have welcomed as treasures contempt, torments, and the most cruel deaths that the cruelty of tyrants could contrive.

O Lord! I now understand that Thou hast created us to love and please Thee. In past time I was wretched enough, instead of pleasing Thee, to cause Thee so much displeasure. What do I say? I could die of grief at the very thought. I hope that now Thou hast pardoned

[1] *Love of God*, book 12, ch. 13.

me for Thy mercy's sake. Since Thou hast now pardoned me, I give Thee my whole will, my whole self. Take possession of me forever; make me all Thine. Draw me ever closer within Thy heart. Banish from me every love that is not Thee, who art my only good, my only Love. O Mary, Mother of God! thou after Jesus art my hope. I ask of God the grace to be wholly his; this is his only desire for us. Thou canst do all things with God; thou must obtain for me this grace.

O divine Love, how is it that Thou art so despised by men? O men, look at the Son of God upon that cross, who like a lamb is sacrificing himself by a painful death to pay for your sins, and so to gain your love; look at him, and love him.

My Jesus, worthy of infinite love, let me not live any longer ungrateful for such goodness. In past time I have thought but little of corresponding to the love that Thou hast borne me; for the future I will only think of loving and pleasing Thee. Let us strip ourselves of all self-love, and of all earthly affections, to give our will wholly, wholly to God without reserve. O Lord! dispose of me and of all belonging to me for life and death as Thou wilt: I only will what Thou willest. My only desire is to love Thee always in this life and for all eternity. And what will I but Thee alone, O God of my heart?

O blood of my Jesus, inebriate me with the love of Jesus! O wounds of Jesus, pierce me with the love of Jesus! O death of Jesus, make me die to every love that is not for Jesus! My Jesus, I love Thee above all things; I love Thee with my whole soul; I love Thee more than myself. My beloved Lord, give me Thy love, and make me all Thine. O Mary, my Mother! again I beg of thee, make me all for Jesus. Thou canst do so; I hope it from thee.

5. DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS.

O loving Heart of Jesus! inflame this poor heart of mine.

My Jesus, when shall I begin to love Thee as Thou hast loved me?

My God, when shall I die to everything, to live to Thee alone?

My beloved One, make me love Thee even in sufferings.

Thou hast loved me without reserve; I also will love Thee without reserve.

My Jesus, make Thyself known and loved by all.

My Jesus, grant that I may die, saying, I love Thee, I love Thee.

My God, suffer me not to lose Thee forever. Give me the grace to love Thee, and then do with me what Thou wilt.

At this hour I might have been in hell; but now I love Thee, and I hope always to love Thee.

And what else do I wish for, O my God! but Thee, who art my chief, my only good?

My Jesus, in the Day of Judgment do not separate me from Thee.

My Jesus, how lovely art Thou, but by how few art Thou loved!

Oh that I could die of grief every time that I think of having voluntarily lost Thee!

My Jesus, grant me Thy love, and I ask Thee for nothing more.

Thou hast died for me; I wish also to die for Thee.

O death of Jesus! from thee I hope for a good death.

O blood of Jesus! from thee I hope for the pardon of all my sins.

O wounds of Jesus! from you I hope to love Jesus forever.

O agony of Jesus! from thee I hope to bear peacefully the agony of my death.

O sorrows of Jesus! from you I hope for patience in all contradictions.

O scourges of Jesus! deliver me from everlasting despair.

O tears of Mary! obtain for me sorrow for my sins.

My own St. Joseph, by thy happy death obtain for me a good death.

O ye holy Apostles! by your blessed death obtain for me the grace to die in the love of God.

And what wish I, either in this life or in the next, but Thee alone, my God?

My Jesus, had I died in sin, I could no more love Thee; now I desire to love Thee, and Thee alone.

My God, I love Thee, and I will love none but Thee.

St. Teresa, St. Philip Neri, my advocates, make me burn with love for Jesus, as you yourselves did burn.

My Jesus, by the pain Thou didst endure when Thy left hand was pierced with the nail, give me a true sorrow for my sins.

My Jesus, by the pain Thou didst endure when Thy right hand was pierced with the nail, give me perseverance in Thy grace.

My Jesus, by the pain Thou didst endure when Thy left foot was pierced with the nail, deliver me from the pains of hell.

My Jesus, by the pain Thou didst endure when Thy right foot was pierced with the nail, give me the grace to love Thee eternally in heaven.

My Jesus, by the wound that was made in Thy Sacred Heart, give me the grace to love Thee always in this life and in the next.

Live, Jesus, our Love,
And Mary, our Hope.

HYMN.

On the Love which Jesus bears to the Soul.

Oh, it were joy and high reward,
  Transpierced with wound of love, to die
For that most lovely, loving God
  For whom alone all hearts should sigh.

Such is his beauty, such his grace,
  That stars of heaven, or gems of earth,
Compared with that divinest face
  Lose their loveliness and worth.

He seeks his prey with skill divine,
  He draws his bow, the arrow flies;
The heart is pierced, and forced to pine
  With love for him for whom it dies.

To wound those souls he longs to gain,
  The charm of varied guise he found,
And all to make those hearts remain
  Close to his heart for ever bound.

For this the Word Divine appears
  On earth, a babe, so poor, so weak;
And from our hearts, with infant tears,
  All love, he came our love to seek.

In youth He next is seen again
  A lowly humble artisan,
And God's own Son does not disdain
  The vilest services of man.

At last a criminal in chains
  Himself unto his spouse he shows;
And thus his life of varied pains
  He ends amid the direst woes.

His love does more;—in form of bread
To give himself he yet desires;
There with himself the soul is fed
That loves and to his love aspires.

His love knows every winning way;
He spares no toil, he fears no pain,
To make another heart his prey,
Or truer love from it to gain.

Sometimes he loves to banish fear,
With all the sweetness of a spouse;
Anon he shows a look severe:
'Tis all fresh fervor to arouse.

Of old he deigned my heart to woo,
And bound me with love's fiery chains;
Then seized my heart his hostage true,
And jealous still his prey retains.

Then silence, wicked world! depart,—
Seek not esteem or love of mine;
Another Lover owns my heart,
His charms are other far than thine.

III. *CONFORMITY TO THE WILL OF GOD.**

I.

Excellence of this Virtue.

Our whole perfection consists in loving God, who is in himself most lovely: *Charity is the bond of perfection.*[1] But, then, all perfection in the love of God consists in the union of our own with his most holy will. This, indeed, is the principal effect of love; as St. Dionysius the Areopagite observes, "such a union of the will of those who love as makes it to become one and the same will."[2] And therefore the more united a person is with the divine will, so much greater will be his love. It is quite true that mortifications, meditations, Communions, and works of charity towards others are pleasing to God. But where is this the case? When they are done in conformity to his will; for otherwise, not only does he not approve them, but he abominates and punishes them. Suppose that there are two servants, one of whom labors hard and incessantly throughout the day, but will do everything after his own fashion; while the other does

* This is a golden treatise that seems rather to have been inspired from Heaven than to have emanated from the human mind. The Saint himself read it again and again; he constantly practised the wise maxims that it contains, always endeavored to inculcate its practice on others, and was accustomed to say, "The saints became saints because they always remained united with the will of God." After his eyesight had begun to fail him, he took care to have his little treatise read to him.—Ed.

[1] "Charitatem habete, quod est vinculum perfectionis."—*Col.* iii. 14.

[2] *De div. nom.* c. 4.

not work so much, but acts always in obedience to orders: is it not certain that the latter, and not the former, is the one who pleases his master? In what respect do any works of ours serve to the glory of God, where they are not done according to his good pleasure? It is not sacrifices that the Lord desires, says the prophet to Saul, but obedience to his will: *Does the Lord desire holocausts and victims, and not rather that the voice of the Lord should be obeyed?*[1] To refuse to obey is like the crime of idolatry. He who will act from his own will, independently of that of God, commits a kind of idolatry; since in that case, instead of worshipping the divine will, he worships, in a certain sense, his own.

The greatest glory, then, that we can give to God is the fulfilment in everything of his holy will. This is what our Redeemer, whose object in coming upon earth was the establishment of the glory of God, principally came to teach us by his example. See how St. Paul makes him address his eternal Father: *Sacrifice and oblation Thou wouldst not; but a body Thou hast fitted to Me: then said I, Behold, I come, that I should do Thy will, O God.*[2] Thou hast refused to accept the victims which mankind have offered Thee. It is Thy will that I should sacrifice to Thee the body which Thou hast given Me; lo, I am ready to perform that will of Thine. And hence it is that he so often declares that he had come upon earth not to fulfil his own, but his Father's will only: *I came down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of Him that sent Me.*[3] And on this account he wished that

[1] "Numquid vult Dominus holocausta et victimas, et non potius ut obediatur voci Domini? . . . Quasi scelus idolatriæ est nolle acquiescere."—1 *Kings*, xv. 22.

[2] "Hostiam et oblationem noluisti, corpus autem aptasti mihi. . . . Tunc dixi: Ecce venio, . . . ut faciam, Deus, voluntatem tuam."—*Heb.* x. 5.

[3] "Descendi de cœlo, non ut faciam voluntatem meam, sed voluntatem ejus qui misit me."—*John*, vi. 38.

the world might have known the love which he bore toward his Father, from the obedience to his will which he manifested in sacrificing himself upon the cross for the salvation of mankind; just as he said himself in the garden, when going forth to meet his enemies, who had come to take him and lead him away to death: *That the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father hath given Me commandment, so do I: arise, let us go hence.*[1] And for this reason, too, it was that he said that he would recognize as a brother of his own him who should have acted according to the divine will: *Whosoever shall do the will of My Father, he is My brother.*[2]

On this account it is that all the saints have ever kept steadfastly in view the fulfilment of the divine will, thoroughly understanding that herein consists the entire perfection of a soul. The blessed Henry Suso used to say, "God does not desire that we should abound in knowledge, but that in all things we should submit ourselves to his will." And St. Teresa, "All that one who devotes himself to prayer has need to acquire is the conformity of his own will to the divine; and he may rest assured that herein consists the highest perfection. Whoever practises this best will receive from God the greatest gifts, and will make most progress in the interior life."[3] The Dominican nun the Blessed Stephana of Soncino, being one day, in a vision, carried into heaven, saw certain persons who had died, and with whom she had been acquainted, stationed amongst the seraphim; and it was told her that these had been raised to so high a position in glory through the perfect conformity to God's will which they had practised on earth. And the Blessed

[1] "Ut cognoscat mundus quia diligo Patrem, et sicut mandatum dedit mihi Pater, sic facio: surgite, eamus hinc."—*John*, xiv. 31.

[2] "Quicunque enim fecerit voluntatem Patris mei . . . ipse est meus frater."—*Matt.* xii. 50.

[3] *Interior Castle*, d. 2, ch. 1.

Suso already mentioned used to say, when speaking of himself: "I would much rather be the vilest worm of earth through God's will than a seraph through my own."

While we are in this world, we should learn from the blessed in heaven the way in which we have to love God. The pure and perfect love which the blessed in heaven entertain for God lies in their own perfect union with the divine will. Should the seraphim understand it to be his will that they must employ themselves for all eternity in gathering into a heap the sands of the sea-shore, or in plucking up the grass from the gardens, they would willingly do it with all possible pleasure. Nay, more: if God were to give them to understand that they should go to burn in the flames of hell, they would immediately precipitate themselves into that abyss, in order to accomplish the divine will. And it is this that Jesus Christ has taught us to pray,—namely, that we may perform the divine will on earth, as the saints perform it in heaven: *Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.*[1] The Lord calls David a man after his own heart, because David accomplished all his desires: *I have found a man according to My own heart, who shall do all My wills.*[2] David was ever prepared to embrace the divine will, as he frequently declared: *My heart is ready, O God; my heart is ready.*[3] And, on the other hand, the only prayer which he made to the Lord was that he would teach him to do his will: *Teach me to do Thy will.*[4] A single act of perfect conformity to the divine will is sufficient to make one a saint. Look at Saul, whom Jesus Christ illumi-

[1] "Fiat voluntas tua, sicut in cœlo et in terra."—*Matt.* vi. 10.

[2] "Inveni David, filium Jesse, virum secundum cor meum, qui faciet omnes voluntates meas."—*Acts*, xiii. 22.

[3] "Paratum cor meum, Deus, paratum cor meum."—*Ps.* lvi. 8; cvii. 1.

[4] "Doce me facere voluntatem tuam."—*Ps.* cxlii. 10.

nates and converts, while he is going on in his persecution of the Church. What does Saul do? what does he say? He simply makes an offering of himself to do the divine will: *Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?*[1] And, behold, the Lord declares him to be a vessel of election and apostle of the Gentiles: *This man is to Me a vessel of election, to carry My name before the Gentiles.*[2] Yes, for he who gives his will to God gives him everything: he who gives him his goods in alms, his blood by disciplines, his food by fasting, gives to God a part of what he possesses; but he who gives him his will gives him the whole; so that he can say to him, Lord, I am poor, but I give Thee all that is in my power; in giving Thee my will, there remains nothing for me to give Thee. But this is precisely all that our God claims from us: *My son, give Me thy heart.*[3] My son, says the Lord to each of us,—My son, give Me thy heart; that is to say, thy will. "There is no offering," says St. Augustine, "that we can make to God more acceptable to himself than to say to him, Take possession of us."[4] No, we cannot offer to God anything more precious than by saying to him, Lord, take possession of us; we give our whole will to Thee; make us understand what it is that Thou dost desire of us, and we will perform it.

If, then, we would give a full satisfaction to the heart of God, we must bring our own will in everything into conformity with his; and not only into conformity, but into uniformity, too, as regards all that God ordains. Conformity signifies the conjoining of our own will to the will of God; but uniformity signifies, further, our

[1] "Domine, quid me vis facere?"—*Acts*, ix. 6.

[2] "Vas electionis est mihi iste, ut portet nomen meum coram gentibus."—*Acts*, ix. 15.

[3] "Præbe, fili mi, cor tuum mihi."—*Prov.* xxiii. 26.

[4] "Nihil gratius Deo possumus offerre, quam ut dicamus ei: Posside nos."—*In Ps.* cxxxi.

making of the divine and our own will one will only, so that we desire nothing but what God desires, and his sole will becomes ours. This is the sum and substance of that perfection to which we ought to be ever aspiring; this is what must be the aim of all our works, and of all our desires, meditations, and prayers. For this we must invoke the assistance of all our patron saints and of our guardian angels, and, above all, of our divine Mother Mary, who was the most perfect of all the saints, for the reason that she ever embraced most perfectly the divine will.

II.

Conformity in All Things.

But the chief point lies in our embracing the will of God in all things which befall us, not only when they are favorable, but when they are contrary to our desires. When things go on well, even sinners find no difficulty in being in a state of conformity to the divine will; but the saints are in conformity also under circumstances which run counter and are mortifying to self-love. It is herein that the perfection of our love for God is shown. The Venerable Father John Avila used to say, "A single 'Blessed be God,' when things go contrary, is of more value than thousands of thanksgivings when they are to our liking."

Moreover, we must bring ourselves into conformity to the divine will, not only as regards those adverse circumstances which come to us directly from God,—such, for instance, as infirmities, desolations of spirit, poverty, the death of parents, and other things of a similar nature,—but also as regards those which come to us through the instrumentality of men, as in the case of contumelies, reproaches, acts of injustice, thefts, and persecutions of every kind. On this point, we must un-

derstand that when we suffer injury from any one in our reputation, our honor, or our property, although the the Lord does not will the sin which such a one commits, he nevertheless does will our humiliation, our poverty, and our mortification. It is certain and of faith, that everything that comes to pass in the world comes to pass through the divine will: *I form the light and darkness, I make peace and create evil.*[1] From God come all things that are good and all things that are evil; that is to say, all things that are contrary to our own liking, and that we falsely call evil; for, in truth, they are good, when we receive them as coming from his hands: *Shall there be an evil in the city which the Lord hath not done?*[2] said the prophet Amos. And the Wise Man said it before: *Good things and evil, life and death, are from God.*[3] It is true, as I observed above, that whenever any one unjustly treats you in an injurious manner, God does not will the sin which such a person commits, nor concur in the malice of his intentions; but he quite concurs, with a general concurrence, as regards the material action by which such a one wounds, plunders, or injures you; so that what you have to suffer is certainly willed by God, and comes to you from his hands. Hence it was that the Lord told David that he was the author of the injuries which Absalom would inflict upon him, even to the taking away his wives in his very presence; and that in punishment for his sins: *Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thy own house, and I will take thy wives before thy eyes, and give them to thy neighbor.*[4] Hence, too,

[1] "Ego Dominus, et non est alter, formans lucem et tenebras, faciens pacem et creans malum."—*Isa.* xlv. 8.

[2] "Si erit malum in civitate, quod Dominus non fecerit?"—*Amos*, iii. 6.

[3] "Bona et mala, vita et mors, paupertas et honestas, a Deo sunt."—*Eccles.* xi. 14.

[4] "Ecce ego suscitabo super te malum de domo tua, et tollam uxores tuas in oculis tuis, et dabo proximo tuo."—2 *Kings*, xii. 11.

he told the Jews that it would be as a punishment for their wickedness when he should have commanded the Assyrians to spoil and bring them to ruin: *The Assyrian, he is the rod of My fury. . . . I will give him a charge to take away the spoils, and to lay hold on the prey;*[1] which St. Augustine explains, "The wickedness of these men is made to be, as it were, an axe of God."[2] God uses the iniquity of the Assyrians, like an axe, to chastise the Jews. And Jesus himself said to St. Peter that his Passion and death did not come to him so much from men, as from his Father himself: *The chalice which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?*[3]

When the messenger (who is thought to have been the devil) came to Job to tell him that the Sabeans had taken all his goods away and had put his sons to death, what is the saint's reply? *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away.*[4] He said not, the Lord hath given me sons and property, and the Sabeans have taken them away from me; but the Lord hath given them me, and the Lord hath taken them away; because he perfectly understood that that loss of his was willed by God; and therefore he added, *As it hath pleased the Lord, so is it done: blessed be the name of the Lord.*[5] We must not, then, look upon the troubles that befall us as happening by chance, or only through the fault of others; we must rest assured that everything that happens to us comes to pass through the divine will. "You should know," says St. Augustine, "that whatever happens in this world contrary to our will does not happen excepting through the will of

[1] "Assur, virga furoris mei . . . mandabo illi ut auferat spolia et diripiat prædam."—*Isa.* x. 5.

[2] "Impietas eorum tamquam securis Dei facta est."—*In Ps.* lxxiii.

[3] "Calicem quem dedit mihi Pater, non bibam illum?"—*John.* xviii. 11.

[4] "Dominus dedit, Dominus abstulit."—*Job*, i. 21.

[5] Sicut Domino placuit, ita factum est; sit nomen Domini benedictum!

God."[1] Epictetus and Atho, blessed martyrs of Jesus Christ, when subjected to the torture by the tyrant, torn with hooks of iron and burnt with blazing torches, said nothing but this: "Lord, let Thy will be accomplished in us;" and on arriving at the place of their suffering, they exclaimed, in a loud voice, "Blessed be Thou, O everlasting God! because Thy will has been in everything fulfilled in us."[2]

Cesarius relates of a certain religious that although there was in no respect any external difference between himself and the others, he had nevertheless arrived at such a degree of sanctity as to heal the sick by the mere touch of his clothes. His Superior, in astonishment at this, one day asked him how he could ever perform such miracles, while his life was not more exemplary than that of others. In reply, he said that it was a matter of astonishment to himself also, and that he did not know how to account for it. "But what devotions do you practise?" asked the Abbot. The good religious, in answer, said that he did but little or nothing in this respect; only that he had ever made it his great care to will that alone which God willed, and that the Lord had granted him the grace to keep his own will thoroughly abandoned in that of God. "Prosperity," he said, "does not elate me, nor does adversity cast me down, because I receive everything from the hands of God; and to this end it is that I direct all my prayers,—namely, that his will may perfectly accomplish itself in me." "And with respect to that loss," rejoined the Superior, "which our enemy caused us the other day, by depriving us of our means of subsistence, setting fire to our farm-buildings where our corn and cattle were housed, did you not feel some resentment in consequence?" "No, my Father,"

[1] "Quidquid hic accidit contra voluntatem nostram, noveritis non accidere nisi de voluntate Dei."—*In Ps.* cxlviii.

[2] Rosweide, *Vit. Pat.* l. 1, c. 12.

was his reply; "but, on the contrary, I returned thanks to God for it, as is my custom in similar cases, knowing that God does and permits all for his own glory and for our greater good; and with this conviction, I am always content under every circumstance that comes to pass."[1] The Abbot, understanding this, and seeing in that soul so great a conformity to the divine will, was no longer surprised at his performance of such great miracles.

III.

Happiness obtained from Perfect Conformity.

He who acts in this way does not only become a saint, but he enjoys, even in this world, a perpetual peace. Alphonsus the Great, King of Arragon, and a most wise prince, on being one day asked whom he considered to be the happiest man in the world, replied, He who abandons himself to the will of God, and receives all things, whether prosperous or adverse, as from his hands.

To those who love God, all things work unto good.[2] Those who love God are ever content, because their whole pleasure lies in the accomplishment, even in things that run counter to themselves, of the divine will; and hence even afflictions themselves are converted into their contentment, by the thought that in the acceptance of them they are giving pleasure to their Lord whom they love: *Whatsoever shall befall the just man, it shall not make him sad.*[3] And, in truth, what greater contentment can a man ever experience than in seeing the accomplishment of all that he desires? Now, whenever any one desires nothing save what God desires, since everything that comes to pass in the world (sin only excepted) always comes to pass through the will of God, everything that such a one

[1] *Cæs. Dial.* l. 10, c. 6.

[2] "Diligentibus Deum omnia cooperantur in bonum."—*Rom.* viii. 28.

[3] "Non contristabit justum, quidquid ei acciderit."—*Prov.* xii. 21.

desires does consequently come to pass. There is a story in the lives of the Fathers of a certain countryman whose land was more productive than that of others, and who, on being asked how it happened, replied that no one should be surprised at it, because he always had such weather as he desired. "And how so?" it was asked. "Yes," replied he, "because I desire no weather but that which God desires; and as I desire what God desires, so does he give me the fruits of the earth as I desire them."

Souls that are truly resigned, says Salvian, if they are in a state of humiliation, desire this; if they suffer poverty, they desire to be poor; in short, whatever happens to them, they desire it all, and therefore they are, in this life, happy: "They are in humble station, they wish for this; they are poor, they make poverty their delight; therefore we must say of them that they are happy."[1] When cold or heat, rain or wind, prevails, he who is in a state of union with the divine will says, I wish it to be cold, I wish it to be hot; I wish the wind to blow, the rain to fall, because God wishes it so. Does poverty, persecution, sickness, death arrive, I also wish (says such a one) to be poor, persecuted, sick; I wish even to die, because God wishes it thus.

This is the beautiful liberty that the sons of God enjoy, worth more than all the domains and all the kingdoms of this world. This is that great peace that the saints experience, which *surpasseth all understanding*,[2] with which all the pleasures of the senses, all gayeties, festivities, distinctions, and all other worldly satisfactions, cannot compete; for these, being, as they are, unsubstantial and transitory, although, while they last, they may be fascinating to the senses, nevertheless do

[1] "Humiles sunt, hoc volunt; pauperes sunt, pauperie delectantur; itaque beati dicendi sunt."—*De Gub. Dei*, l. 1.

[2] "Pax Dei, qua exsuperat omnem sensum."—*Phil.* iv. 7.

not bring contentment, but affliction, to the spirit wherein true contentment resides: so that Solomon, after having enjoyed such worldly pleasures to the full, cried out, in his affliction, *But this also is vanity and vexation of spirit.*[1]

The fool (says the Holy Spirit) *is changed like the moon: the holy man continueth in wisdom like the sun.*[2] The fool—that is to say, the sinner—changes like the moon, which to-day grows, to-morrow wanes. To-day you will see him laughing, to-morrow weeping; to-day all gentleness, to-morrow furious like the tiger. And why so? because his contentment depends on the prosperity or the adversity that he meets with; and therefore he varies as the circumstances which befall him vary. Whereas the just man is like the sun, ever uniform in his serenity under whatever circumstances may come to pass; because his contentment lies in his uniformity to the divine will, and therefore he enjoys a peace that nothing can disturb: *And on earth peace to men of good will*,[3] said the angel to the shepherds. And who can these men of good will ever be but those who are at all times in unison with the will of God, which is supremely good and perfect? *The will of God is good, delightful, and perfect.*[4] Yes, because he wills only that which is best and most perfect.

The saints, through their conformity to the divine will, have enjoyed in this world a paradise in anticipation. St. Dorotheus tells us that it was thus that the ancient Fathers kept themselves in profound peace, receiving all things as they did from the hands of God. When St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi heard mention only of the will of God, she used to experience so intense consolation

[1] "Et hoc vanitas et afflictio spiritus."—*Eccles.* iv. 16.

[2] "Homo sanctus in sapientia manet sicut sol; nam stultus sicut luna mutatur."—*Ecclus.* xxvii. 12.

[3] "Et in terra pax hominibus bonæ voluntatis."—*Luke*, ii. 14.

[4] "Voluntas Dei bona, et bene placens, et perfecta."—*Rom.* xii. 2.

that she fell into an ecstasy of love. And although, on the other hand, the sting of adverse circumstances will not fail to make itself felt, yet its influence will not extend beyond the lower part of our nature; for in the higher part of the soul there will reign peace and tranquillity while the will remains in union with that of God. *Your joy* (said the Redeemer to the Apostles) *no man shall take from you. That your joy may be full.*[1] He who is ever in conformity to the divine will possesses a full and perpetual joy;—full, because he has all that he wishes for, as was observed above; perpetual, because it is a joy of which no one can deprive him, while, at the same time, no one can prevent that which God wills from coming to pass.

Father John Taulerus relates of himself that after having for many years prayed the Lord to send some one to instruct him in the true spiritual life, he one day heard a voice saying to him, "Go to such a church, and you will find what you ask for." On reaching the church, he finds at the gate a beggar, barefooted and with scarcely a rag on his back. He salutes him: "Good day, my friend." The poor man replies, "Sir, I do not remember ever to have had a bad day." The Father rejoins, "God grant you a happy life;" to which he answers, "But I have never been unhappy." And then he goes on to say, "Listen, my Father; it is not without reason that I have told you that I have never had a bad day; because, when I suffer hunger, I praise God; when it snows or rains, I bless him; if I am treated with contempt, or repulsed by any, or if I experience misfortunes of any other kind, I always give glory to my God for it. I said, besides, that I have never been unhappy, and this also is true; because it is my habit to desire, without reservation, all that God desires; therefore, in all that happens

[1] "Gaudium vestrum nemo tollet a vobis. . . . Gaudium vestrum sit plenum."—*John*, xvi. 22–24.

to me, whether it be pleasant or painful, I receive it from his hands with joy, as being what is best for me; and herein lies my happiness." "And if it should ever happen," says Taulerus, "that God willed you to be damned, what would you say then?" "If God were to will this," replied the beggar, "I would, with all humility and love, lock myself so fast in my Lord's embrace, and hold him so tight, that if it were to be his will to cast me down into hell, he would be obliged to come along with me; and thus, with him, it would then be sweeter to me to be in hell than to possess without him all the enjoyments of heaven." "Where was it that you found God?" said the Father. "I found him where I took leave of creatures," was the reply. "Who are you?" The poor man answered, "I am a king." "And where is your kingdom?" "It is within my soul, where I keep everything in due order; the passions are subjected to the reason, and the reason to God." In conclusion, Taulerus asked him what it was that had led him on to so high a degree of perfection? "It has been silence," said he, "observing silence with man, in order to hold converse with God; and also the union which I have maintained with my Lord, in whom I have found, and still do find, all my peace."[1] Such, in short, had this poor man become through his union with the divine will; and certainly he was, in all his poverty, more wealthy than all the monarchs of the earth, and in his sufferings more happy than all the men of the world with their earthly pleasures.

IV.

God Wishes Only Our Good.

Oh, great indeed is the folly of those who fight against the divine will! They have now to suffer troubles, because no one can ever prevent the accom-

[1] St. Jure, *Knowledge*, etc., l. 3, ch. 8.

plishment of the divine decrees: *Who resisteth His will?*[1] And, on the other hand, they have to suffer them without deriving benefit from them; nay, even drawing down upon themselves greater chastisements in the next life, and greater disquietude in this: *Who hath resisted Him, and hath had peace?*[2] Let the sick man make as great an outcry as he will about his pains; let him who is in poverty complain, rave, blaspheme against God as much as he pleases in his distresses,—what will he gain by it, but the doubling of his affliction? "What are you in search of, O foolish man," says Augustine, "when seeking good things? Seek that one Good in whom are all things good."[3] What are you going in search of, poor silly fellow, outside of thy God? Find God, unite yourself to his will, bind yourself up with it; and you will be ever happy, both in this life and in the other.

And, in short, what is there that God wills but our good? Whom can we ever find to love us more than he? It is his will, not merely that no one should perish, but that all should save and sanctify themselves: *Not willing that any should perish, but that all should return to penance.*[4] *This is the will of God, your sanctification.*[5] It is in our good that God has placed his own glory, being, as St. Leo says, in his own nature goodness infinite,—"God, whose nature is goodness,"—and it being the nature of goodness to desire to spread itself abroad, God has a supreme desire to make the souls of men partakers of his own bliss and glory. And if, in this life, he sends us tribulations, they are all for our own good: *All things*

[1] "Voluntati enim ejus quis resistit?"—*Rom.* ix. 19.

[2] "Quis restitit ei, et pacem habuit?"—*Job*, ix. 4.

[3] "Quid quæris, homuncio, quærendo bona? Ama unum bonum in quo sunt omnia bona."—*Man.* c. 34.

[4] "Nolens aliquos perire, sed omnes ad pœnitentiam reverti."—2 *Peter*, iii. 9.

[5] "Hæc est enim voluntas Dei, sanctificatio vestra."—1 *Thess.* iv. 3.

work together unto good.[1] Even chastisements, as was observed by the holy Judith, do not come to us from God for our destruction, but in order to our amendment and salvation: *Let us believe that they have happened for our amendment, and not for our destruction.*[2] In order to save us from eternal evils, the Lord throws his own good will around us: *O Lord, Thou hast crowned us as with a shield of Thy good will.*[3] He not only desires, but is anxious for, our salvation: *The Lord is careful for me.*[4] And what is there that God will ever refuse us, says St. Paul, after having given us his own Son? *He that spared not even His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how hath He not also with Him given us all things.*[5] This, then, is the confidence in which we ought to abandon ourselves to the divine dispensations, all of which have for their object our own good. Let us ever say, under all the circumstances that may happen to befall us, *In peace, in the self-same, I will sleep and I will rest; for Thou, O Lord, singularly hast settled me in hope.*[6] Let us also place ourselves entirely in his hands, for he will certainly take care of us: *Casting all your care upon Him, for He hath care of you.*[7] Then, let our thoughts be fixed on God, and on the fulfilment of his will, that he may think of us and of our good. "Daughter," said the Lord to St.

[1] "Omnia cooperantur in bonum."—*Rom.* viii. 28.

[2] "Ad emendationem, et non ad perditionem nostram evenisse credamus."—*Judith*, viii. 27.

[3] "Domine, ut scuto bonæ voluntatis tuæ coronasti nos."—*Ps.* v. 13.

[4] "Dominus sollicitus est mei."—*Ps.* xxxix. 18.

[5] "Qui etiam proprio Filio suo non pepercit, sed pro nobis omnibus tradidit illum, quomodo non etiam cum illo omnia nobis donavit?"—*Rom.* viii. 32.

[6] "In pace in idipsum dormiam et requiescam; quoniam tu, Domine, singulariter in spe constituisti me."—*Ps.* iv. 10.

[7] "Omnem sollicitudinem vestram projicientes in eum, quoniam ipsi cura est de vobis."—1 *Peter*, v. 7.

Catharine of Sienna, "do thou think of Me, and I will ever think of thee." Let us be frequently saying with the sacred spouse, *My Beloved to me, and I to Him.*[1] The thoughts of my Beloved are upon my good; I will think of nothing but of pleasing him, and bringing myself into a state of perfect uniformity to his holy will. The holy Abbot Nilus used to say that we ought never to pray to God that he would make our will succeed, but that in us he would accomplish his own will. And whenever, too, things that are contrary befall us, let us accept them all, as from God's hands, not merely with patience, but with joy, as did the Apostles when they *went from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus.*[2] And what greater satisfaction can a soul enjoy than in the knowledge that by suffering with a good will anything that it may have to suffer it gives to God the greatest pleasure that it can give him? The masters of the spiritual life teach that, though the desire which certain souls have of suffering to give him pleasure is acceptable to him, he is yet more pleased with the conformity of those who wish for neither joy nor pain, but, in perfect resignation to his holy will, have no other desire than to fulfil whatever that will may be.

If then, O devout soul! you would please God, and live in this world a life of contentment, unite yourself ever and in everything to the divine will. Consider that all the sins that you have committed, when leading a life of disorder and distress, have come to pass in consequence of having separated yourself from the will of God. Bind yourself up, from this day forward, with his good pleasure; and always say, in everything that may befall you: *Yea, Father; for so hath it seemed good in Thy*

[1] "Dilectus meus mihi, et ego illi."—*Cant.* ii. 16.

[2] "Ibant gaudentes a conspectu concilii, quoniam digni habiti sunt pro nomine Jesu contumeliam pati."—*Acts*, v. 41.

sight.[1] Thus let it be, O Lord! since thus it is pleasing unto Thee. Whenever you feel yourself troubled on account of any occurrence of an adverse description, consider that it has come from God; and therefore say at once, "Thus God wills," and so remain in peace. *I was dumb, and I opened not my mouth, because Thou hast done it.*[2] Lord, since Thou hast done it, I say nothing, and accept it. To this end you must direct all your thoughts and prayers; namely, to strive and pray ever unto God, in meditations, in Communions, in visits to the Most Holy Sacrament, that he would make you accomplish his will. And ever be making an offering of yourself, saying, My God, behold, here I am; do what Thou willest with me, and with all that I have. This was St. Teresa's continual exercise; fifty times a day at least did the saint offer herself to the Lord, that he might dispose of her according to his pleasure.

Oh, happy will you, my reader, be if you act ever thus! You will certainly become a saint; your life will be one of peace, and your death will be one of greater happiness still When any one is passing to the other life, all the hopes that are conceived of his salvation depend on the judgment formed as to whether he has died in resignation or not. If, after having, during life, welcomed to your embrace all things that have come from God, you in like manner embrace death also in order to accomplish his divine will, you will certainly secure your salvation and die the death of a saint. Let us, then, abandon ourselves in everything to the good pleasure of that Lord who, being most wise, knows what is best for us; and being most loving, since he has sacrificed his life through love for us, wills also that

[1] "Ita, Pater, quoniam sic fuit placitum ante te."—*Matt.* xi. 26.

[2] "Obmutui et non aperui os meum, quoniam tu fecisti."—*Ps.* xxxviii. 10.

[3] *Ep. ad Eustathium.*

which is most for our good. And let us, too, be thoroughly assured and convinced that, as St. Basil says God lays himself out for our good, incomparably beyond all that we ourselves could ever do or desire.[3]

V.

Special Practices of this Conformity.

But let us now look at the matter in a more practical point of view, and consider what things there are in which we have to bring ourselves into uniformity to the will of God.

1. ORDINARY OR COMMON ACCIDENTS.

In the first place, we must have this uniformity as regards those things of nature that come to us from without; as when there is great heat, great cold, rain, scarcity, pestilence, and the like. We must take care not to say, What intolerable heat! what horrible cold! what a misfortune! how unlucky! what wretched weather! or other words expressive of repugnance to the will of God. We ought to will everything to be as it is, since God is he who orders it all. St. Francis Borgia, on going one night to a house of the Society when the snow was falling, knocked at the door several times; but, the Fathers being asleep, he was not let in. They made great lamentations in the morning for having kept him so long waiting in the open air; but the saint said that during that time he had been greatly consoled by the thought that it was God who was casting down upon him those flakes of snow.

In the second place, we must have this conformity as regards things that happen to us from within, as in the sufferings consequent on hunger, thirst, poverty, desolations, or disgrace. In all, we ought ever to say, "Lord, be it Thine to make and to unmake. I am content; I

will only what thou dost will."[1] And thus, too, we ought, as F. Rodriguez says, to reply to such imaginary cases as the devil occasionally suggests to the mind, in order to make us fall into some consent that is wrong, or at least to disgust us. If such a person were to say so and so to you, if he were to do so and so to you, what would you say? what would you do? Let our answer always be, "I would say and do that which God wills." And by this means we shall keep ourselves free from all fault and molestation.

2. NATURAL DEFECTS.

In the third place, if we have any natural defect either in mind or body,—a bad memory, slowness of apprehension, mean abilities, a crippled limb, or weak health,—let us not therefore make lamentation. What were our deserts, and what obligation had God to bestow upon us a mind more richly endowed, or a body more perfectly framed? Could he not have created us mere brute animals? or have left us in our own nothingness? Who is there that ever receives a gift and tries to make bargains about it? Let us, then, return him thanks for what, through a pure act of his goodness, he has bestowed upon us; and let us rest content with the manner in which he has treated us. Who can tell whether, if we had had a larger share of ability, stronger health, or greater personal attractions, we should not have possessed them to our destruction? How many there are whose ruin has been occasioned by their talents and learning, of which they have grown proud, and in consequence of which they have looked upon others with contempt,—a danger which is easily incurred by those who excel others in learning and ability! How many others there are whose personal beauty or bodily

[1] *Christian Perfection*, p. 1, tr. 8, ch. 7.

strength have furnished the occasions of plunging them into innumerable acts of wickedness! And, on the contrary, how many others there are who, in consequence of their poverty, or infirmity, or ugliness, have sanctified themselves and been saved; who, had they been rich, strong, or handsome, would have been damned! And thus let us ourselves rest content with that which God has given us: *But one thing is necessary.*[1] Beauty is not necessary, nor health, nor sharpness of intellect; that which alone is necessary is our salvation.

3. CORPORAL MALADIES.

In the fourth place, we must be particularly resigned under the pressure of corporal infirmities; and we must embrace them willingly, both in such a manner, and for such a time, as God wills. Nevertheless, we ought to employ the usual remedies; for this is what the Lord wills also: but if they do us no good, let us unite ourselves to the will of God, and this will do us much more good than health. O Lord! let us then say, I have no wish either to get well or to remain sick: I will only that which Thou dost will. Certainly the virtue is greater, if, in times of sickness, we do not complain of our sufferings; but when these press heavily upon us, it is not a fault to make them known to our friends, or even to pray to God to liberate us from them. I am speaking now of sufferings that are severe; for, on the other hand, there are many who are very faulty in this, that on every trifling pain or weariness they would have the whole world come to compassionate them, and to shed tears around them. Even Jesus Christ, on seeing the near approach of his most bitter Passion, manifested to his disciples what he suffered: *My soul is sorrowful even unto death;*[2] and he prayed the Eternal Father to liberate

[1] "Porro unum est necessarium."—*Luke*, x. 42.

[2] "Tristis est anima mea usque ad mortem."—*Matt.* xxvi. 38.

him from it: *My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me.*[1] But Jesus himself has taught us what we ought to do after praying in like manner; namely, straightway to resign ourselves to the divine will, adding, as he did, *Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt.*[2]

How foolish, too, are those who say that they wish for health, not indeed, in order to suffer, but to render greater service to God, by the observance of the rules, by serving the community, by going to church, by receiving Holy Communion, by doing penance, by study, by employing themselves in the saving of souls, by hearing confessions, and by preaching! But, my good friend, I wish you would tell me why it is that you desire to do these things? Is it to please God? And why go out of your way in order to do this; certain, as you are, that what pleases God is, not that you pray, receive Communion, do acts of penance, study, or preach sermons, but that you suffer with patience the infirmity or the pains which he sees fit to send you? Unite, then, your own sufferings to those of Jesus Christ. But, you say, I am troubled that, in consequence of being such an invalid, I am useless and burdensome to the community and to the house. But as you resign yourself to the will of God, so you ought to believe that your Superiors, too, resign themselves, seeing, as they do, that it is not through any laziness of your own, but through the will of God, that you have laid this burden upon the house. Ah, these desires and regrets do not spring from the love of God, but from the love of self, which is hunting after excuses for departing from the will of God! Is it our wish to give pleasure to God? Let us say, then, whenever we happen to be confined to bed, to the Lord this only, *Fiat voluntas Tua*, "Thy will be done." And let us be ever repeating it, although for the hun-

[1] "Pater mi, si possibile est, transeat a me calix iste."—*Ibid.* 39.

[2] Verumtamen, non sicut ego volo, sed sicut tu.

dredth or thousandth time; and by this alone we shall give more pleasure to God than we could give him by all the mortifications and devotions which we could perform. There is no better mode of serving God than by cheerfully embracing his will. The Venerable Father Avila wrote thus to a priest who was an invalid: "My friend, do not stop to calculate what you might do if you were well, but be content to remain unwell as long as God shall please. If your object be to do the will of God, how is it of more consequence for you to be well than ill?"[1] And certainly this was wisely said; for God is not glorified so much by our works as by our resignation and conformity to his holy will. And therefore St. Francis de Sales used to say that we serve God more by suffering than by working.

It will often happen that we shall find ourselves without doctors and medicine; or, again, our medical attendant may not clearly understand our complaint; and here, too, we must be in a state of conformity to the divine will, which ordains it to be so for our good. It is related of one who had a devotion to St. Thomas of Canterbury, that, being unwell, he went to the tomb of the saint to obtain his recovery. He returned home in good health; but then he said within himself, But if the sickness would have been a greater help towards my salvation, what benefit shall I gain from the health which I now have? With this thought in his mind, he went back to the tomb, and prayed the saint to ask for him of God that which was the more expedient of the two for his eternal salvation; and after doing this he relapsed into the sickness, and remained in it with perfect contentment, holding it for certain that God ordained it to be so for his good. There is a similar anecdote related by Surius,[2] of a certain blind man who received his sight

[1] Lett. xiii. ed. Migne.

[2] February 6.

through the intercession of the Bishop St. Vedast; but afterwards prayed that, if that sight was not expedient for his soul, he might return to his former state of blindness; and after this prayer he continued blind as before. In times of sickness, then, it is best not to seek after health, either good or bad, but to abandon ourselves to the will of God, that he may dispose of us as pleases him. But if health is what we would seek, let us ask for it with resignation at least, and on the condition that health of body be suitable to the health of our soul; otherwise a prayer to this effect will be faulty, and rejected, because the Lord does not listen to prayers of this description when unaccompanied by resignation.

I call the time of sickness the touchstone by which spirits are tried, because in it is ascertained the value of the virtue of which any one stands possessed. If he does not lose his tranquillity, if he makes no complaints, and is not over-anxious, but obeys his medical advisers and his superiors, preserving throughout the same peacefulness of mind, in perfect resignation to the divine will, it is a sign that he possesses great virtue. But what, then, ought one to say of the sick person who laments and says that he receives but little assistance from others; that his sufferings are intolerable; that he can find no remedy to do him good; that his medical man is ignorant; at times complaining even to God that his hand presses too heavily upon him? St. Bonaventure relates,[1] in his Life of St. Francis, that when the saint was suffering pains of an extraordinary severity, one of his religious, who was somewhat over-simple, said to him, "Father, pray to God to treat you with a little more gentleness; for it seems that he lays his hand upon you too heavily." St. Francis, on hearing this, cried aloud, and said to him in reply, "Listen; if I did not know that these words of yours were the offspring of mere simplicity, I would

[1] Chap. 14.

never see you more,—daring, as you have done, to find fault with the judgments of God." And after saying this, extremely enfeebled and emaciated through his sickness though he was, he threw himself from his bed upon the floor and kissing it, he said, "Lord, I thank Thee for all the sufferings which Thou sendest me. I pray Thee to send me more of them, if it so please Thee. It is my delight for Thee to afflict me, and not to spare me in the least degree, because the fulfilment of Thy will is the greatest consolation which in this life I can receive."

4. LOSS OF USEFUL PERSONS.

Under this head we must also class the loss which we may at times have to suffer of persons who, in either a temporal or spiritual point of view, happen to be of service to us. This is a matter in regard to which those who are devout are often very faulty, through their want of resignation to the divine dispensations. Our sanctification must come to us, not from spiritual directors, but from God. It is, indeed, his will that we should avail ourselves of directors as spiritual guides, when he gives them to us; but when he takes them away, he wills that we should rest content with this, and increase our confidence in his goodness; saying at such times, Lord, it is Thou who hast given me this assistance; now Thou hast taken it from me; may Thy will be ever done; but I pray Thee now to supply my wants Thyself, and to teach me what I ought to do to serve Thee. And in the same way ought we to receive all other crosses from the hands of God. But so many troubles, you say, are chastisements. But, I ask in reply, are not the chastisements that God sends us in this life acts of kindness and benefits? If we have offended him, we have to satisfy the divine justice in some way or other, either in this life or in the next. Therefore we ought all of us to say with

St. Augustine, "Here burn, here cut, here do not spare; that so Thou mayest spare in eternity;"[1] and again, with holy Job: *And that this may be my comfort, that, afflicting me with sorrow, He spare not.*[2] It ought, too, to be a consolation to one who has deserved hell to see that God is punishing him in this world; because this ought to give him good hopes that it may be God's will to deliver him from punishment eternal. Let us, then, say, when suffering the chastisements of God, what was said by Heli the high priest: *It is the Lord; let Him do what is good in His sight.*[3]

5. SPIRITUAL DESOLATION.

Moreover, we ought to be resigned in times of spiritual desolation. The Lord is accustomed, when a soul gives itself up to the spiritual life, to heap consolations upon it, in order to wean it from the pleasures of the world; but afterwards, when he sees it more settled in spiritual ways, he draws back his hand, in order to make proof of its love, and to see whether it serves and loves him unrecompensed, while in this world, with spiritual joys. "While we are living here," as St. Teresa used to say, "our gain does not consist in any increase of our enjoyment of God, but in the performance of his will." And in another passage: "The love of God does not consist in tenderness, but in serving him with firmness and humility." And again, elsewhere: "The Lord makes trial of those who love him by means of drynesses and temptations." Let, then, the soul thank the Lord when he caresses it with sweetnesses; but not torment itself by acts of impatience, when it beholds itself left in a

[1] Hic ure, hic seca, hic non parcas, ut in æternum parcas.

[2] "Hæc sit mihi consolatio, ut affligens me dolore non parcat."—*Job*, vi. 10.

[3] "Dominus est; quod bonum est in oculis suis, faciat."—1 *Kings*, iii. 18.

state of desolation. This is a point which should be well attended to; for some foolish persons, seeing themselves in a state of aridity, think that God may have abandoned them; or, again, that the spiritual life was not made for them; and so they leave off prayer, and lose all that they have gained. There is no time better for exercising our resignation to the will of God than that of dryness. I am not saying that you will not suffer pain on seeing yourself bereft of the sensible presence of your God; it is impossible for a soul not to feel such pain as this; nor can it refrain from lamentation, when our Redeemer himself upon the cross made lamentation on this account: *My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?*[1] But, in its sufferings, it should ever resign itself perfectly to the will of its Lord. These spiritual desolations and abandonments are what all the saints have suffered. "What hardness of heart," said St. Bernard, "do I not experience! I no longer find any delight in reading, no longer any pleasure in meditation or in prayer." The condition of the saints has been ordinarily one of dryness, not of sensible consolations. These are things which the Lord does not bestow, excepting on rare occasions, and to perhaps the weaker sort of spirits, in order to prevent their coming to a standstill in their spiritual course: the joys which he proposes as rewards, he prepares for us in Paradise. This world is the place for meriting, where we merit by suffering; heaven is the place for recompense and enjoyments. Therefore, what the saints have desired and sought for in this world has been, not a sensible fervor with rejoicing, but a spiritual fervor with suffering. The Ven. John Avila used to say, "Oh, how much better is it to be in dryness and temptations with the will of God, than in contemplation without it!"[2]

[1] "Deus meus! Deus meus! ut quid dereliquisti me?"—*Matt.* xxvii. 46.

[2] *Audi fil.*, c. 26.

But, you will say, if I could only know that this desolation comes from God, I should be content; but what afflicts and disquiets me is the fear that it may have come through my own fault, and as a punishment for my tepidity. Well, then, take your tepidity out of the way, and employ greater diligence. But will you, because you are perhaps under a cloud,—will you therefore disquiet yourself, leave off prayer, and thus double the evil of which you complain? Let it be that, as you say, the dryness is come upon you as a chastisement. Then accept it as a chastisement on one who so much deserves to be chastised, and unite yourself to the divine will. Do you not say that you deserve hell? And why, then, are you complaining? Perhaps it is because you deserve that God should give you consolations? Ah, go and rest content with the manner in which God is dealing with you; persevere in prayer, and in the way on which you have entered; and henceforth let it be your fear that your complaints may arise from your little humility and your little resignation to the will of God. When a soul applies itself to prayer, it can derive no benefit from it that can be greater than the union of itself with the divine will. Therefore make an act of resignation, and say, Lord, I accept this pain from Thy hands, and I accept it for as long as may please Thee; if it be Thy will that I should be thus afflicted for all eternity, I am content. And in this way your prayer, painful though it may be, will be a greater help to you than any consolation, however sweet.

We must, however, bear in mind that dryness is not always a punishment, but is occasionally ordained by God for our greater good, and in order to keep us humble. That St. Paul might not grow proud of the gifts that he had received, the Lord permitted him to be tormented by temptations of impurity: *Lest the greatness of the revelations should exalt me, there was given me a sting of*

my flesh, an angel of Satan, to buffet me.[1] He who prays in times of sweetness does no great thing: *There is a friend, a companion at table; and he will not abide in the day of distress.*[2] You would not esteem to be a true friend of yours the man who was with you only at your table; but him who assisted you in times of trouble, and without advantage to any interests of his own. When God sends darkness and desolations, it is then that he is trying who are true friends of his. Palladius suffered great weariness in prayer; and when he went to tell St. Macarius, the latter said to him, "When the thought suggests itself to you that you should leave off prayer, let this be your reply: I am content, for the love of Jesus Christ, to remain here as guardian of the walls of this cell."[3] This, then, is your answer, whenever you feel yourself tempted to leave off prayer, because it appears to you as no better than a mere waste of time: "I am here in order to give pleasure to God." St. Francis de Sales used to say that if in time of prayer we did no more than drive away distractions and temptations, our prayer would, nevertheless, be well made. Nay, Taulerus says that on him who perseveres in prayer in a state of aridity, God will bestow greater graces than had he prayed much with great sensible devotion. F. Rodriguez[4] tells us of a certain person who used to say that during forty years of prayer he had never experienced any consolation; but that on such days as he prayed he found himself strong in virtue; whereas, on the contrary, on whatever day he omitted it he experienced such a weakness as made him unfit for anything

[1] "Ne magnitudo revelationum extollat me, datus est mihi stimulus carnis meæ, angelus Satanæ, qui me colaphizet."—2 *Cor.* xii. 7.

[2] "Est amicus socius mensæ, et non permanebit in die necessitatis."—*Ecclus.* vi. 10.

[3] *Hist. laus.* c. 20.

[4] *Christ. Perf.* p. 1, tr. 8, ch. 29.

that was good. It is observed by S. Bonaventure, and by Gerson,[1] that many serve God more in the absence of the recollection they desire than if they had possessed it; because they thus live in a state of greater diligence and humility; whereas otherwise they might perhaps become proud and more tepid, thinking that they had already gained the object of their desire. And what is said with regard to aridity must also be said of temptations. We ought to try to avoid temptations; but if God wills or permits that we be tempted against the faith, against purity, or against any other virtue, we ought not to complain, but resign ourselves in this also to the divine will. To St. Paul, who prayed to be released from his temptation to impurity, the Lord made answer, *My grace is sufficient for thee.*[2] And so, if we see that God does not listen to us, by releasing us from some troublesome temptation, let us likewise say, Lord, do and permit that which pleaseth Thee; Thy grace is sufficient for me; only grant me Thy assistance, that I may never lose it. It is not temptations, but the consenting to temptations, that is the cause of our loss of divine grace. Temptations, when we overcome them, keep us more humble, gain for us greater merits, make us have recourse to God more frequently; and thus keep us further from offending him, and unite us more closely to his holy love.

6. DEATH.

Lastly, we must unite ourselves to the will of God in regard to our death, and as to the time and the manner in which he will send it. St. Gertrude one day, when climbing up a hill, slipped and fell into a ravine. Her companions asked her afterwards whether she would not have been afraid to die without the sacraments? The

[1] *De Prof. rel.* l. 2, c. 76.
[2] 2 *Cor.* xii. 9.

saint answered, "It is my great desire to die with the sacraments; but I consider that the will of God is more to be accounted of, because I hold that the best disposition one could have for dying a good death would be one's submission to that which God might will; consequently, I desire whatever death my Lord shall be pleased to allot me." It is related by St Gregory, in his *Dialogues*, that the Vandals having condemned to death a certain priest named Santolo, they granted him the liberty of choosing the kind of death which he would prefer; but the holy man refused to make a selection, saying, "I am in the hands of God, and will suffer the death which he permits you to make me suffer; nor do I wish for any other than that."[2] This act was so pleasing to God that, when these barbarous men had resolved on having his head cut off, he held back the executioner's arm; whereupon they gave in to so great a miracle, and spared his life. As to the manner, then, we ought to esteem that death to be the best for us which God may have determined shall be ours. Save us, Lord (let us ever say, when thinking of our death); and then let us die in whatever manner seemeth good unto Thee.

Thus, again, we ought to unite our will to his as to the time of our death. What is this world but a prison for us to suffer in, and to be in danger every moment of losing God? It was this that caused David to exclaim, *Bring my soul out of prison.*[3] It was this fear that made St. Teresa sigh for death. On hearing the clock strike, she felt the utmost consolation in the thought that an hour of her life had passed, an hour of her danger of losing God. Father Avila used to say that every one with imperfect dispositions ought to desire death, because of the danger in which we live of losing the divine

[1] *Insin.* l. 1, c. 11.

[2] L. 3, c. 37.

[3] "Educ de custodia animam meam."—*Ps.* cxli. 8.

grace. What is more precious, or more to be desired, than by a good death to secure to ourselves the impossibility of losing the grace of our God? But, you say, "I have as yet done nothing; there is nothing that I have gained for my soul." But if it be the will of God for your life to terminate at this time, what would you do afterwards, if you were to remain alive contrary to his will? And who knows whether, in that case, you would die such a death as you can have hopes of dying now? Who knows whether, through a change of will, you might not fall into other sins, and involve yourself in damnation? And even were there nothing else, yet by remaining alive you could not live without committing at least venial sins. Hence St. Bernard exclaims, "Why, oh, why do we wish for a life in which the longer we live, the more we sin?[1] And it is certain that one single venial sin displeases God more than all the good works that we can do please him.

I say, moreover, that he who has but little desire for Paradise shows that he has but little love for God. One who loves desires the presence of the object loved; but we cannot see God without leaving this world; and therefore it is that all the saints have sighed for death, in order to go and see the Lord whom they have loved. Thus did Augustine sigh, "Oh, may I die, that I may see thee!"[2] Thus, too, St. Paul: *Having a desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ.*[3] Thus, again, David: *When shall I come and appear before the face of God?*[4] And in like manner, too, all the souls that have been enamoured of God. It is related by a certain writer that one day, as a gentleman was out hunting in a forest, he heard a

[1] "Cur vitam istam desideramus, in qua, quanto amplius vivimus, tanto plus peccamus?"—*Med.* c. 2.

[2] Eia moriar, ut te videam!

[3] "Desiderium habens dissolvi, et esse cum Christo."—*Phil.* i. 23.

[4] "Quando veniam et apparebo ante faciem Dei?"—*Ps.* xli. 3.

man singing sweetly; on going in that direction, he found a poor leper in a state of semi-putrefaction: he asked him if it was he who was singing? "Yes," answered he, "it was I, sir, who was singing." "And how can you ever be singing and contented under sufferings like these, which are taking your life away?" The leper answered, "There is nothing to stand between my Lord God and myself but this wall of clay, which is my body; when this impediment is removed, I shall go to enjoy my God. And seeing, as I do, that it is falling into pieces every day, I therefore rejoice and sing."

7. SPIRITUAL GOODS.

Finally, even as regards our degrees in grace and glory we must bring our own will into conformity to the divine. Highly as we ought to value the things of the glory of God, we ought to value his will yet more. It is right for us to desire to love him more than the Seraphim do, but it is not right for us to go on to wish for any other degree of love than that which the Lord has determined on granting us. Father Avila says, "I do not believe that there was ever a saint who did not desire to be better than he was. But it has not deprived any one of them of his peace; because this desire of theirs had not relation to any cravings of their own, but to God; with whose measures of distribution they rested content, although he might have given them less than others; out of true love deeming that contentment with what God gave them had a greater value than the desire of possessing much.' It all comes to this, as F. Rodriguez explains it,[1] that although we ought to be diligent to attain the greatest perfection in our power, that our own lukewarmness and laziness may not be furnished with an excuse, as in the case of those who say, God has to give me what I need—I can only do so much; nevertheless, when

[1] *Christ. Perf.* p. 1, tr. 8, ch. 30.

we fall short, we ought not to lose our peace and conformity to the will of God, which has permitted the failing on our part, nor our courage either. Let us raise ourselves up immediately from our fall; let us humble ourselves in acts of penance; and, seeking for greater assistance from God, let us pursue our course. So, in like manner, although we may rightly desire to be added in heaven to the choir of the Seraphim,—not, indeed, that we may have the more glory for ourselves, but in order to give greater glory to God, and that we may love him the more,—we ought, nevertheless, to resign ourselves to his holy will, contenting ourselves with that degree which, through his mercy, he shall vouchsafe to grant us.

It would, moreover, be but too evident a fault to desire to possess gifts of supernatural prayer—such, more especially, as ecstasies, visions, and revelations; whereas, on the contrary, spiritual writers say that those souls on which God bestows the favor of such graces ought to pray to him to deprive them of them, in order that they may love him by the way of pure faith, which is the safest way. There are many who have attained perfection without these supernatural graces. Those only are virtues that raise the soul to sanctity; and chief amongst their number stands conformity to the will of God. If God does not choose to raise us to a high degree of perfection and of glory, let us conform ourselves in all respects to his holy will, praying to him that he would at least save us through his mercy. And if we act in this manner, the reward will not be small which, of his goodness, our good Lord will give us; loving above everything, as he does, those souls that are resigned.

VI.

Conclusion.

In short, we ought to regard all things that do or will happen to us as proceeding from God's hand; and every-

thing that we do we ought to direct to this one end, the fulfilment of his will, and to do it simply because God wills it to be done. And in order to go on with greater security in this, we must follow the guidance of our superiors as regards what is external, and of our directors with regard to what is internal, that so we may, through them, understand what it is that God desires of us, having great faith in those words of Jesus Christ to us: *He that heareth you heareth Me.*[1] And, above all, let it be our study to serve God in the way in which it is his will that we should serve him. I say this, that we may shun the deception practised upon himself by one who loses his time, amusing himself by saying, "If I were in a desert, if I were to enter into a monastery, if I were to go somewhere, so as not to remain in this house, to a distance from these relatives or these companions of mine—I would sanctify myself; I would do such and such penance; I would say such and such prayers." He says, "I would do, I would do;" but in the mean time, through bearing with a bad will the cross which God sends him—in short, through not walking in the way that God wills for him—he not only does not sanctify himself, but goes on from bad to worse. These desires are temptations of the devil, at such times when they are not in accordance with the will of God; we must therefore drive them away, and brace ourselves up to the service of God in that one way which he has chosen for us. By doing his will, we shall certainly sanctify ourselves in any state wherein God places us. Let us, then, ever will that only which God wills, that so he may take and press us to his heart; and, for this end, let us make ourselves familiar with some of those passages of Scripture that call upon us to unite ourselves ever more and more to the divine will: *Lord, what wilt*

[1] "Qui vos audit, me audit."—*Luke*, x. 16.

thou have me to do?[1] My God, tell me what thou desirest of me; for I desire to do it all. *I am Thine: save Thou me.*[2] O my Lord! I am no longer my own, but Thine; do with me whatsoever Thou dost please. And at such times especially as any very grievous calamity befalls us —as in the case of the death of parents, of the loss of property, and things of a similar kind— *Yea, Father* (let it ever be ours to say), *yea, Father; for so hath it seemed good in Thy sight.*[3] Yes, my God and my Father, let it be even so; for so it hath pleased Thee. And, above all, let us love that prayer which Jesus Christ has taught us: *Fiat voluntas Tua sicut in cœlo et in terra*,—"Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." The Lord told St. Catharine of Genoa that whenever she said the "Our Father," she was to pay particular attention to these words, and pray that his holy will might be fulfilled by her with the same perfection with which it is fulfilled by the saints in heaven. Let us, too, act in this manner, and we shall certainly become saints ourselves.

May the divine will, and the Blessed and Immaculate Virgin Mary, be ever loved and praised!

[1] "Domine, quid me vis facere?"—*Acts*, ix. 6.

[2] "Tuus sum ego, salvum me fac."—*Ps.* cxviii. 94.

[3] "Ita Peter! quoniam sic fuit placitum ante te."—*Matt.* xi. 26.

HYMN.

How Amiable is the Will of God!

'Tis Thy good pleasure, not my own,
In Thee, my God, I love alone;
And nothing I desire of Thee
But what Thy goodness wills for me.
O will of God! O will divine!
All, all our love be ever Thine.

In love no rival canst Thou bear,
But Thou art full of tenderest care;
And fire and sweetness all divine
To hearts which once are wholly Thine.
O will of God, etc.

In Thee all pure affections live,
To love Thou dost perfection give;
While ever burning with desires
The loving soul to Thee aspires.
O will of God, etc.

Thou makest crosses soft and light
And death itself seem sweet and bright.
No cross nor fear that soul dismays
Whose will to Thee united stays.
O will of God, etc.

To all the glorious choirs of heaven
Their very bliss by Thee is given;
And heaven itself deprived of Thee
Would be a land of misery.
O will of God, etc.

Yea, to the lost who burn in hell,
If in their souls Thy love could dwell,
The very flames and torments there
Would seem but sweet and light to bear.
O will of God, etc.

Oh! that one day my life may end
In closest bonds to Thee enchained!
For thus to die is not to die,
But live, and live eternally.
O will of God, etc.

To Thee I consecrate and give
My heart and being while I live;
Jesus, Thy heart alone shall be
My love for all eternity.
O will of God, etc.

Alike in pleasure and in pain
To please Thee is my joy and gain;
That, O my Love, which pleases Thee
Shall ever more seem best to me.
May heaven and earth with love fulfil,
My God, Thy ever-blessed will!

IV. *THE WAY TO CONVERSE ALWAYS AND FAMILIARLY WITH GOD.*

TAKEN FROM A SMALL FRENCH WORK, AND ENLARGED BY OTHER SACRED THOUGHTS, AFFECTIONS, AND EXERCISES OF THE AUTHOR.

I.

God wishes Us to speak to Him with Confidence and Familiarity.

Holy Job was struck with wonder to consider our God so devoted in benefiting man, and showing the chief care of his heart to be, to love man and to make himself beloved by him. Speaking to the Lord, he exclaims, *What is man, that Thou shouldst magnify him, or why dost Thou set Thy Heart upon him?*[1] Hence it is clearly a mistake to think that great confidence and familiarity in treating with God is a want of reverence to his Infinite Majesty. You ought indeed, O devout soul! to revere him in all humility, and abase yourself before him; especially when you call to mind the unthankfulness and the outrages whereof, in past times, you have been guilty. Yet this should not hinder your treating with him with the most tender love and confidence in your power. He is Infinite Majesty; but at the same time he is Infinite Goodness, Infinite Love. In God you possess the Lord most exalted and supreme; but you have also him who loves you with the greatest possible love. He disdains not, but delights that you should use towards him that confidence, that freedom and tenderness, which children

[1] "Quid est homo, quia magnificas eum? aut quid apponis erga eum cor tuum?"—*Job*, vii. 17.

use towards their mothers. Hear how he invites us to come to his feet, and the caresses he promises to bestow on us: *You shall be carried at the breasts, and upon the knees they shall caress you: as one whom the mother caresseth, so will I comfort you.*[1] As a mother delights to place her little child upon her knees, and so to feed or to caress him; with like tenderness does our gracious God delight to treat the souls whom he loves, who have given themselves wholly to him, and placed all their hopes in his goodness.

Consider, you have no friend nor brother, nor father nor mother, nor spouse nor lover, who loves you more than your God. The divine grace is that great treasure whereby we vilest of creatures, we servants, become the dear friends of our Creator himself: *For she is an infinite treasure to men, which they that use become the friends of God*[2] For this purpose he increases our confidence; he *emptied himself*,[3] and brought himself to nought, so to speak; abasing himself even to becoming man and conversing familiarly with us: *He conversed with men.*[4] He went so far as to become an infant, to become poor, even so far as openly to die the death of a malefactor upon the cross. He went yet farther, even to hide himself under the appearance of bread, in order to become our constant companion and unite himself intimately to us: *He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood abideth in Me, and I in him.*[5] In a word, he loves you as much as though he had no love but towards yourself alone. For

[1] "Ad ubera portabimini, et super genua blandientur vobis; quomodo si cui mater blandiatur, ita ego consolabor vos."—*Isa.* lxvi. 12.

[2] "Infinitus enim thesaurus est hominibus, quo qui usi sunt, participes facti sunt amicitiæ Dei."—*Wis.* vii. 14.

[3] "Semetipsum exinanivit."—*Phil.* ii. 7.

[4] "Et cum hominibus conversatus est."—*Bar.* iii. 38.

[5] "Qui manducat meam carnem et bibit meum sanguinem, in me manet, et ego in illo."—*John*, vi. 57.

which reason you ought to have no love for any but for himself. Of him, therefore, you may say, and you ought to say, *My Beloved to me, and I to Him.*[1] My God has given himself all to me, and I give myself all to him; He has chosen me for his beloved, and I choose him, of all others, for my only Love: *My Beloved is white and ruddy, chosen out of thousands.*[2]

Say, then, to him often, O my Lord! wherefore dost Thou love me thus? what good thing dost Thou see in me? Hast Thou forgotten the injuries I have done Thee? But since Thou hast treated me so lovingly, and instead of casting me into hell, hast granted me so many favors, whom can I desire to love from this day forward but Thee, my God, my all? Ah, most gracious God, if in time past I have offended Thee, it is not so much the punishment I have deserved that now grieves me, as the displeasure I have given Thee, who art worthy of infinite love. But Thou knowest not how to despise a heart that repents and humbles itself: *A contrite and humble heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.*[3] Ah, now, indeed, neither in this life nor in the other do I desire any but Thee alone: *What have I in heaven? and besides Thee what do I desire upon earth! Thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion forever.*[4] Thou alone art and shalt be forever the only Lord of my heart, of my will; Thou my only good, my heaven, my hope, my love, my all: "The God of my heart, and the God that is my portion forever."

The more to strengthen your confidence in God, often call to mind his loving treatment of you, and the gra-

[1] "Dilectus meus mihi, et ego illi."—*Cant.* ii. 16.

[2] "Dilectus meus . . . electus ex millibus."—*Cant.* v. 10.

[3] "Cor contritum et humiliatum, Deus, non despicies."—*Ps.* l. 19.

[4] "Quid enim mihi est in cœlo? et a te quid volui super terram? . . . Deus cordis mei, et pars mea Deus in æternum."—*Ps.* lxxii. 25.

cious means he has used to drive you from the disorders of your life and your attachments to earth, in order to draw you to his holy love; and therefore fear to have too little confidence in treating with your God, now that you have a resolute will to love and to please him with all your power. The mercies he has granted you are most sure pledges of the love he bears you. God is displeased with a want of trust on the part of souls that heartily love him, and whom he loves. If, then, you desire to please his loving heart, converse with him from this day forward with the greatest confidence and tenderness you can possibly have.

I have graven thee in My hands: thy walls are always before My eyes.[1] Beloved soul, says the Lord, what do you fear or mistrust? I have you written in my hands, so as never to forget to do you good. Are you afraid of your enemies? Know that the care of your defence is always before me, so that I cannot lose sight of it. Therefore did David rejoice, saying to God, *Thou hast crowned us as with a shield of Thy good will.*[2] Who, O Lord! can ever harm us, if Thou with Thy goodness and love dost defend and encompass us round about? Above all, animate your confidence at the thought of the gift that God has given us of Jesus Christ: *God so loved the world as to give His only-begotten Son.*[3] How can we ever fear, exclaims the Apostle, that God would refuse us any good, after he has vouchsafed to give us his own Son? *He delivered Him up for us all; how hath He not also, with Him, given us all things?*[4]

[1] "Ecce in manibus meis descripsi te; muri tui coram oculis meis semper."—*Isa.* xlix. 16.

[2] "Domine, ut scuto bonæ voluntatis tuæ coronasti nos."—*Ps.* v. 13.

[3] "Sic enim Deus dilexit mundum, ut Filium suum unigenitum daret."—*John*, iii. 16.

[4] "Pro nobis omnibus tradidit illum; quomodo non etiam cum illo omnia nobis donavit?"—*Rom.* viii. 32.

My delights are to be with the children of men.[1] The paradise of God, so to speak, is the heart of man. Does God love you? Love him. His delights are to be with you; let yours be to be with himself, to pass all your lifetime with him, in the delight of whose company you hope to spend a blissful eternity. Accustom yourself to speak with him alone, familiarly, with confidence and love, as to the dearest friend you have, and who loves you best.

II.

It is Easy and Agreeable to entertain One's Self with God.

If it be a great mistake, as has been already said, to converse mistrustfully with God,—to be always coming before him as a slave, full of fear and confusion, comes before his prince, trembling with dread,—it would be a greater to think that conversing with God is but weariness and bitterness. No, it is not so: *Her conversation hath no bitterness, nor her company any tediousness.*[2] Ask those souls who love him with a true love, and they will tell you that in the sorrows of their life they find no greater, no truer relief, than in a loving converse with God.

Now this does not require that you continually apply your mind to it, so as to forget all your employments and recreations. It only requires of you, without putting these aside, to act towards God as you act on occasion towards those who love you and whom you love.

Your God is ever near you, nay, within you: *In Him we live, and move, and be.*[3] There is no barrier at the door against any who desire to speak with him; nay, God delights that you should treat with him confidently. Treat

[1] "Deliciæ meæ esse cum filiis hominum."—*Prov.* viii. 31.

[2] "Non enim habet amaritudinem conversatio illius, nec tædium convictus illius."—*Wis.* viii. 16.

[3] "In ipso enim vivimus, et movemur, et sumus."—*Acts,* xvii. 28.

with him of your business, your plans, your griefs, your fears,—of all that concerns you. Above all, do so (as I have said) with confidence, with open heart. For God is not wont to speak to the soul that speaks not to him; forasmuch as, if it be not used to converse with him, it would little understand his voice when he spoke to it. And this is what the Lord complains of: *Our sister is little: what shall we do to our sister in the day when she is to be spoken to?*[1] Our sister is but a child in my love; what shall we do to speak to her if she understand me not? God will have himself esteemed the Lord of surpassing power and terribleness, when we despise his grace; but, on the contrary, he will have himself treated with as the most affectionate friend when we love him; and to this end he would have us often speak with him familiarly and without restraint.

It is true that God ought always to be revered in the highest degree; but when he favors you by making you feel his presence and know his desire that you should speak to him as to that one who loves you above all, then express to him your feelings with freedom and confidence. *She preventeth them that covet her, so that she first showeth herself unto them.*[2] When you desire his love, he takes the first step, without waiting till you come to him; and presents himself to you, bringing with him the graces and the remedies you stand in need of. He only waits for you to speak to him, to show you that he is near to you, ready to hear and to comfort you: *And His ears are unto their prayers.*[3]

By reason of his immensity, our God is in every place; but there are two places above all where he has his own

[1] "Soror nostra parva . . . quid faciemus sorori nostræ, in die quando alloquenda est?"—*Cant.* viii. 8.

[2] "Præoccupat qui se concupiscunt, ut se illis prior ostendat."—*Wis.* vi. 14.

[3] "Et aures ejus in preces eorum."—*Ps.* xxxiii. 16.

peculiar dwelling. One is the highest heaven, where he is present by that glory which he communicates to the blessed; the other is upon earth,—it is within the humble soul that loves him: *Who dwelleth with a contrite and humble spirit.*[1] He, then, our God, dwelleth in the height of heaven; and yet he disdains not to occupy and engage himself day and night with his faithful servants in their cabins or their cells. And there he bestows on them his divine consolations, each one of which surpasses all the delights the world can give, and which he only does not desire who has no experience of them: *Oh, taste and see that the Lord is sweet.*[2]

Friends in the world have some hours in which they converse together, and others during which they are apart; but between God and you, if you wish, there shall never be one hour of separation: *Thou shalt rest, and thy sleep shall be sweet: the Lord will be at thy side.*[3] You may sleep, and God will place himself at your side, and watch with you continually: *I will repose myself with Him, and He shall be a comfort in my cares and grief.*[4] When you take your rest, he departs not from beside your pillow; he remains thinking always of you, that when you wake in the night he may speak to you by his inspirations, and receive from you some act of love, of oblation, of thanksgiving; so as to keep up even in those hours his gracious and sweet converse with you. Sometimes also he will speak to you in your sleep, and cause you to hear his voice, that on waking you may put in

[1] "In sancto habitans, et cum contrito et humili spiritu."—*Isa.* lvii. 15.

[2] "Gustate, et videte quoniam suavis est Dominus."—*Ps.* xxxiii. 9.

[3] "Quiesces, et suavis erit somnus tuus. . . . Dominus enim erit in latere tuo."—*Prov.* iii. 24.

[4] "Conquiescam cum illa . . . et erit allocutio cogitationis."—*Wis.* viii. 9–16.

practice what he has spoken: *I will speak to him in a dream.*[1]

He is there also in the morning, to hear from you some word of affection, of confidence; to be the depositary of your first thoughts, and of all the actions which you promise to perform that day to please him; of all the griefs, too, which you offer to endure willingly for his glory and love. But as he fails not to present himself to you at the moment of your waking, fail not you, on your part, to give him immediately a look of love, and to rejoice when your God announces to you the glad tidings that he is not far from you, as once he was by reason of your sins; but that he loves you, and would be beloved by you: and at that same moment he gives you the gracious precept, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart.*[2]

III.

Of what, when, and how we should converse with God.

1. IN GENERAL.

Never, then, forget his sweet presence, as do the greater part of men. Speak to him as often as you can; for he does not grow weary of this nor disdain it, as do the lords of the earth. If you love him, you will not be at a loss what to say to him. Tell him all that occurs to you about yourself and your affairs, as you would tell it to a dear friend. Look not upon him as a haughty sovereign, who will only converse with the great, and on great matters. He, our God, delights to abase himself to converse with us, loves to have us communicate to him our smallest, our most daily concerns. He loves you as much, and has as much care for you, as if he had none others to think of but yourself. He is as entirely

[1] "Per somnium loquar ad illum."—*Num.* xii. 6.

[2] "Diliges Dominum Deum tuum ex corde tuo."—*Deut.* vi. 5.

devoted to your interests as though the only end of his providence were to succor you, of his almighty power to aid you, of his mercy and goodness to take pity on you, to do you good, and gain by the delicate touches of his kindness your confidence and love. Manifest, then, to him freely all your state of mind, and pray to him to guide you to accomplish perfectly his holy will. And let all your desires and plans be simply bent to discover his good pleasure, and do what is agreeable to his divine heart: *Commit thy way to the Lord:*[1] *and desire of Him to direct thy ways, and that all thy counsels may abide in Him.*[2]

Say not, But where is the need of disclosing to God all my wants, if he already sees and knows them better than I? True, he knows them; but God makes as if he knew not the necessities about which you do not speak to him, and for which you seek not his aid. Our Saviour knew well that Lazarus was dead, and yet he made as if he knew it not, until the Magdalene had told him of it, and then he comforted her by raising her brother to life again.[3]

2. IN TRIALS.

When, therefore, you are afflicted with any sickness, temptation, persecution, or other trouble, go at once and beseech him, that his hand may help you. It is enough for you to present the affliction before him; to come in and say, *Behold, O Lord, for I am in distress.*[4] He will not fail to comfort you, or at least to give you strength to suffer that grief with patience; and it will turn out a greater good to you than if he had altogether freed you from it. Tell him all the thoughts of fear or of sadness

[1] "Revela Domino viam tuam."—*Ps.* xxxvi. 5.

[2] "Et pete ab eo ut vias tuas dirigat et omnia consilia tua in ipso permaneant."—*Tob.* iv. 20.

[3] *John*, xi. 1.

[4] *Lam.* i. 20.

that torment you; and say to him, My God, in Thee are all my hopes; I offer to Thee this affliction, and resign myself to Thy will; but do Thou take pity on me,—either deliver me out of it, or give me strength to bear it. And he will truly keep with you that promise made in the Gospel to all those who are in trouble, to console and comfort them as often as they have recourse to him: *Come to Me, all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you.*[1]

He will not be displeased that in your desolations you should go to your friends to find some relief; but he wills you chiefly to have recourse to himself. At all events, therefore, after you have applied to creatures, and they have been unable to comfort your heart, have recourse to your Creator, and say to him, Lord, men have only words for me; *my friends are full of words;*[2] they cannot comfort me, nor do I any more desire to be comforted by them; Thou art all my hope, all my love. From Thee only will I receive comfort; and let my comfort be, on this occasion, to do what pleaseth Thee. Behold me ready to endure this grief through my whole life, through all eternity, if such be Thy good pleasure. Only do Thou help me.

Fear not that he will be offended if you sometimes gently complain, and say to him, *Why, O Lord, hast Thou retired afar off?*[3] Thou knowest, Lord, that I love Thee, and desire nothing but Thy love; in pity help me, and forsake me not. And when the desolation lasts long, and troubles you exceedingly, unite your voice to that of Jesus in agony and dying on the cross, and beseech his mercy, saying, *My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?*[4] But let the effect of this be to humble you

[1] "Venite ad me omnes, qui laboratis et onerati estis, et ego reficiam vos."—*Matt.* xi. 28.

[2] "Verbosi amici mei."—*Job*, xvi. 21.

[3] "Ut quid, Domine, recessisti longe?"—*Ps.* ix. 1.

[4] "Deus meus! ut quid dereliquisti me?"—*Matt.* xxvii. 46.

yet more at the thought that he deserves no consolations who has offended God; and yet more to enliven your confidence, knowing that God does all things, and permits all, for your good: *All things work together unto good.*[1] Say with great courage, even when you feel most troubled and disconsolate: *The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?*[2] Lord, it is Thine to enlighten me, it is Thine to save me; in Thee do I trust: *In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped; let me never be confounded.*[3] And thus keep yourself in peace, knowing there never was any one who placed his hopes in God and was lost: *No one hath hoped in the Lord, and hath been confounded.*[4] Consider, your God loves you more than you can love yourself; what do you fear? David comforted himself, saying, *The Lord is careful for me.*[5] Say to him, therefore, Lord, into Thy arms I cast myself; I desire to have no thought but of loving and pleasing Thee; behold me ready to do what Thou requirest of me. Thou dost not only will my good, Thou art careful for it; unto Thee, then, do I leave the care of my salvation. In Thee do I rest, and will rest for evermore, since Thou willest that in Thee I should place all my hopes: *In peace, in the self-same, I will sleep and I will rest; for Thou, O Lord, singularly hast settled me in hope.*[6]

Think of the Lord in goodness.[7] In these words the Wise Man exhorts us to have more confidence in the divine mercy than dread of the divine justice; since God is

[1] "Omnia cooperantur in bonum."—*Rom.* viii. 28.

[2] "Dominus illuminatio mea et salus mea; quem timebo?"—*Ps.* xxvi. 1.

[3] "In te, Domine, speravi; non confundar in æternum."—*Ps.* xxx. 2.

[4] "Nullus speravit in Domino, et confusus est."—*Ecclus.* ii. 11.

[5] "Dominus sollicitus est mei."—*Ps.* xxxix. 18.

[6] "In pace in idipsum dormiam et requiescam; quoniam tu, Domine, singulariter in spe constituisti me."—*Ps.* iv. 9.

[7] "Sentite de Domino in bonitate."—*Wis.* i. 1.

immeasurably more inclined to bestow favors than to punish; as St. James says, *Mercy exalteth itself above judgment.*[1] Whence the Apostle St. Peter tells us that in all fears, whether about our interests for time or for eternity, we should commit ourselves altogether to the goodness of our God, who keeps the greatest care of our safety: *Casting all your care upon Him, for He hath care of you.*[2] Oh, what a beautiful meaning does this lend to the title which David gives to the Lord, when he says that our God is the God who makes it his care to save: *Our God is the God of salvation;*[3] which signifies, as Bellarmine explains it, that the office peculiar to the Lord is, not to condemn, but to save all. For while he threatens with his displeasure those who disregard him, he promises, on the other hand, his assured mercies to those who fear him; as the divine Mother said in her Canticle, *And His mercy is to them that fear Him.*[4] I set before you, devout soul, all these passages of Scripture, that when the thought disquiets you, Am I to be saved or not? Am I predestined or not? you may take courage, and understand from the promises he makes you what desire God has to save you, if only you are resolved to serve him and to love him as he demands at your hands.

3. IN JOYS.

Further, when you receive pleasant news, do not act like those unfaithful, thankless souls who have recourse to God in time of trouble, but in time of prosperity forget and forsake him. Be as faithful to him as you would be to a friend who loves you and rejoices in your good; go at once and tell him of your gladness, and praise him

[1] "Superexaltat autem misericordia judicium."—*James*, ii. 13.

[2] "Omnem sollicitudinem vestram projicientes in eum, quoniam ipsi cura est de vobis."—1 *Peter*, v. 7.

[3] "Deus noster, Deus salvos faciendi."—*Ps.* lxvii. 21.

[4] Et misericordia ejus . . . timentibus eum.

and give him thanks, acknowledging it all as a gift from his hands; and rejoice in that happiness because it comes to you of his good pleasure. Rejoice, therefore, and comfort yourself in him alone: *I will rejoice in the Lord;*[1] *and I will joy in God my Jesus.*[2] Say to him, My Jesus, I bless, and will ever bless Thee, for granting me so many favors, when I deserved at Thy hands not favors, but chastisements for the affronts I have given Thee. Say to him, with the sacred Spouse, *All fruits, the new and the old, my Beloved, I have kept for Thee.*[3] Lord, I give Thee thanks; I keep in memory all Thy bounties, past and present, to render Thee praise and glory for them forever and ever.

But if you love your God, you ought to rejoice more in his blessedness than in your own. He who loves a friend very much sometimes takes more delight in that friend's good than if it had been his own. Comfort yourself, then, in the knowledge that your God is infinitely blessed. Often say to him, My beloved Lord, I rejoice more in Thy blessedness than in any good of mine; yes, for I love Thee more than I love myself.

4. AFTER A FAULT.

Another mark of confidence highly pleasing to your most loving God is this: that when you have committed any fault, you be not ashamed to go at once to his feet and seek his pardon. Consider that God is so greatly inclined to pardon sinners that he laments their perdition, when they depart far from him and live as dead to his grace. Therefore does he lovingly call them, saying, *Why will you die, O house of Israel? Return ye, and*

[1] "Exultabo in Deo Jesu meo."—*Habac.* iii. 18.

[2] "Cantabo Domino, qui bona tribuit mihi."—*Ps.* xii. 6.

[3] "Omnia poma, nova et vetera, Dilecte mi, servavi tibi,"—*Cant.* vii. 13.

live.[1] He promises to receive the soul that has forsaken him, so soon as she returns to his arms: *Turn ye to me, . . . and I will turn to you.*[2] Oh, if sinners did but know with what tender mercy the Lord stands waiting to forgive them! *The Lord waiteth, that He may have mercy on you.*[3] Oh, did they but know the desire he has, not to chastise, but to see them converted, that he may embrace them, that he may press them to his heart! He declares: *As I live, saith the Lord God, I desire not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live.*[4] He even says: *And then come and accuse Me, saith the Lord: if your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made as white as snow.*[5] As though he had said, Sinners, repent of having offended Me, and then come unto Me: if I do not pardon you, "accuse Me;" upbraid Me, and treat Me as one unfaithful. But no, I will not be wanting to My promise. If you will come, know this: that though your consciences are dyed deep as crimson by your sins, I will make them by My grace as white as snow. In a word, he has declared that when a soul repents of having offended him, he forgets all its sins: *I will not remember all his iniquities.*[6]

As soon, then, as you fall into any fault, raise your eyes to God, make an act of love, and with humble confession of your fault, hope assuredly for his pardon, and say to him, *Lord, behold he whom Thou lovest is sick;*[7] that

[1] "Et quare moriemini, domus Israel? . . . Convertimini, et vivite."—*Ezek.* xviii. 31.

[2] "Convertimini ad me . . . et convertar ad vos."—*Zach.* i. 3.

[3] "Expectat Dominus, ut misereatur vestri."—*Isa.* xxx. 18.

[4] "Vivo ego, dicit Dominus Deus, nolo mortem impii, sed ut convertatur impius a via sua, et vivat."—*Ezek.* xxxiii. 11.

[5] "Et venite et arguite me, dicit Dominus: si fuerint peccata vestra ut coccinum, quasi nix dealbabuntur."—*Isa.* i. 18.

[6] "Omnium iniquitatum ejus . . . non recordabor."—*Ezek.* xviii, 22.

[7] "Domine, ecce quem amas, infirmatur."—*John*, xi. 3.

heart which Thou dost love is sick, is full of sores: *heal my soul; for I have sinned against Thee.*[1] Thou seekest after penitent sinners; behold, here is one at Thy feet, who has come in search of Thee. The evil is done already; what have I now to do? Thou wilt not have me lose courage: after this my sin Thou dost still love me, and I too love Thee. Yes, my God, I love Thee with all my heart; I repent of the displeasure I have given Thee; I purpose never to do so any more. Thou, who art that God, *merciful and gracious, patient and of much compassion,*[2] forgive me; make me to hear what Thou didst say to Magdalene, *Thy sins are forgiven thee;*[3] and give me strength to be faithful unto Thee for the time to come.

That thou mayest not lose courage at such a moment, cast a glance at Jesus on the cross; offer his merits to the Eternal Father; and thus hope certainly for pardon, since he *spared not even His own Son.*[4] Say to him with confidence, *Look on the face of Thy Christ.*[5] My God, behold Thy Son, dead for my sake; and for the love of that Son forgive me. Attend greatly, devout soul, to the instruction commonly given by masters of the spiritual life, after your unfaithful conduct, at once to have recourse to God, though you have repeated it a hundred times in a day; and after your falls, and the recourse you have had to the Lord (as has been just said), at once to be in peace. Otherwise, while you remain cast down and disturbed at the fault you have committed, your converse with God will be small; your trust in him will fail; your desire to love him grow cold; and you will be little able to go forward in the way of the

[1] "Sana animam meam, quia peccavi tibi."—*Ps.* xl. 5.

[2] "Suavis et mitis, et multæ misericordiæ."—*Ps.* lxxxv. 5.

[3] "Remittuntur tibi peccata."—*Luke*, vii. 48.

[4] "Proprio Filio suo non pepercit."—*Rom.* viii. 32.

[5] "Respice in faciem Christi tui."—*Ps.* lxxxiii. 10.

Lord. On the other hand, by having immediate recourse to God to ask his forgiveness, and to promise him amendment, your very faults will serve to advance you further in the divine love. Between friends who sincerely love each other it often happens that when one has displeased the other, and then humbles himself and asks pardon, their friendship thereby becomes stronger than ever. Do you likewise; see to it that your very faults serve to bind you yet closer in love to your God.

5. IN DOUBTS.

In any kind of doubtfulness also, either on your own account or that of others, never leave acting towards your God with a confidence like to that of faithful friends, who consult together on every matter. So do you take counsel with himself, and beseech him to enlighten you that you may decide on what will be most pleasing to him: *Put those words in my mouth, and strengthen the resolution in my heart.*[1] Lord, tell me what Thou wouldst have me to do or to answer; and thus will I. *Speak, Lord; for Thy servant heareth.*[2]

6. FOR YOUR NEIGHBOR.

Use towards him also the freedom of recommending not only your own needs, but also those of others. How agreeable will it be to your God that sometimes you forget even your own interests to speak to him of the advancement of his glory, of the miseries of others, especially those who groan in affliction, of those souls, his spouses, who in purgatory sigh after the vision of himself, and of poor sinners who are living destitute of his grace! For these especially say to him: Lord, Thou who art so amiable, and worthy of an infinite love, how

[1] "Da verbum in ore meo, et in corde meo consilium corrobora."—*Judith*, ix. 18.

[2] "Loquere, Domine, quia audit servus tuus."—1 *Kings*, iii. 10.

dost Thou, then, endure to see such a number of souls in the world, on whom Thou hast bestowed so many favors, and who yet will not know Thee, will not love Thee, nay, even offend and despise Thee? Ah! my God, object of all love, make Thyself to be known, make Thyself to be beloved. "Hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come;"[1] may Thy name be adored and beloved by all; may Thy love reign in all hearts. Ah, let me not depart without granting me some grace for those unfaithful souls for whom I pray.

7. THE DESIRE FOR HEAVEN.

It is said that in purgatory those souls who in this life have had but little longing for heaven are punished with a particular suffering, called the pain of languor; and with reason, because to long but little for heaven is to set small value on the great good of the eternal kingdom which our Redeemer has purchased for us by his death. Forget not, therefore, devout soul, frequently to sigh after heaven: say to your God that it seems to you an endless time for you to come and see him, and to love him face to face. Long ardently to depart out of this banishment, this scene of sinning, and danger of losing his grace, that you may arrive in that land of love where you may love him with all your powers. Say to him again and again, Lord, so long as I live on this earth, I am always in danger of forsaking Thee and losing Thy love. When will it be that I quit this life, wherein I am ever offending Thee, and come to love Thee with all my soul, and unite myself to Thee, with no danger of losing Thee any more? St. Teresa was ever sighing in this way, and used to rejoice when she heard the clock strike, because another hour of life, and of the danger of losing God, was past and gone. For

[1] Sanctificetur nomen tuum; adveniat regnum tuum.

she so greatly desired death in order to see God, that she was dying with the desire to die; and hence she composed that loving canticle of hers, *I die, because I do not die.*

IV.

God answers the Soul that speaks to Him.

In a word, if you desire to delight the loving heart of your God, be careful to speak to him as often as you are able, and with the fullest confidence that he will not disdain to answer and speak with you in return. He does not, indeed, make himself heard in any voice that reaches your ears, but in a voice that your heart can well perceive, when you withdraw from converse with creatures, to occupy yourself in conversing with your God alone: *I will lead her into the wilderness, and I will speak to her heart.*[1] He will then speak to you by such inspirations, such interior lights, such manifestations of his goodness, such sweet touches in your heart, such tokens of forgiveness, such experience of peace, such hopes of heaven, such rejoicings within you, such sweetness of his grace, such loving and close embraces,—in a word, such voices of love,—as are well understood by those souls whom he loves, and who seek for nothing but himself alone.

V.

Practical Summary.

Lastly, to make a brief summary of what has already been said at large, I will not omit to suggest a devout practice whereby you may fulfil all your daily actions in a manner pleasing to God.

When you wake in the morning, let it be your first thought to raise your mind to him, offering to his glory

[1] "Ducam eam in solitudinem, et loquar ad cor ejus."—*Osee*, ii. 14.

all that you shall do or suffer that day, praying to him to assist you by his grace. Then make your other morning acts of devotion, acts of thanksgiving and of love, prayers, and resolutions to live that day as though it were to be the last of your life. Father St. Jure recommends the making in the morning of a compact with the Lord; that every time you make a certain sign, as placing your hand upon your heart, or raising your eyes to heaven or to the crucifix, and the like, you wish thereby to make an act of love, of desire to see him loved by all, of oblation of yourself, and other acts of the same kind. When you have made these acts, and placed your soul in the side of Jesus and under the mantle of Mary, and have prayed the Eternal Father that for the love of Jesus and Mary he would protect you during the day, be careful, before you engage in anything else, to make your mental prayer, or meditation, at least for half an hour; and let your specially chosen meditation be the sorrow and the shame which Jesus Christ suffered in his Passion. This is the dearest subject to loving souls, and the one that most kindles divine love within them. If you would make spiritual progress, let three devotions be especially dear to you; devotion to the Passion of Jesus Christ, to the Most Holy Sacrament, and to the ever-blessed Virgin. In mental prayer, make again and again acts of contrition, of love to God, and oblation of yourself. The Venerable Father Charles Caraffa, founder of the Pious Workers, said that one fervent act of the love of God made thus in the morning is sufficient to maintain the soul in fervor throughout the whole day.

Then, besides the more specific acts of devotion, such as confession, Communion, recitation of the divine office, etc., whenever you are engaged in external occupations, as in study, in labor, or in any other employment that may be proper to your condition, never forget, when

setting about it, to make an offering of it to God, praying for his assistance to enable you to perform it in a perfect manner; and do not omit to retire frequently into the cell of your heart, in order to unite yourself to God, according to the practice of St. Catharine of Sienna. In short, whatever you do, do it with and for God. In going out of your room or house, and on returning again, always commend yourself to the divine Mother, by saying a Hail Mary. When sitting down to meals, make an offering to God of the disgust or gratification you may find in what you eat and drink; and, on rising from table, return thanks to him and say, Lord, how great is Thy goodness to one who has offended Thee so much! In the course of the day be careful to make your spiritual reading, to visit the Most Holy Sacrament and the Most Holy Mary; and in the evening to say the Rosary, and to make an examination of conscience, together with the Christian acts of faith, hope, charity, contrition, resolutions of amendment, and of receiving the Holy Sacraments during life and at the hour of death, forming also the intention of gaining all the indulgences that you can gain. And again, on going to bed, reflect that if you had your deserts, you would be lying down in the flames of hell; then, with the crucifix in your arms, compose yourself to sleep, saying, *In peace, in the self-same, I will sleep and take my rest.*[1]

And here, in passing, I would briefly point out to you the many indulgences that are attached to various prayers or acts of devotion. Whence it is desirable for you in the morning to make the intention of gaining all the indulgences in your power during the day. To one who makes acts of the three theological virtues mentioned above—of faith, etc.—there are granted seven years and seven quarantines for each day; and by con-

[1] "In pace in idipsum dormiam et requiescam."—*Ps.* iv. 9.

tinuing them for a month a plenary indulgence may be gained, provided on the day of his choice he confesses, communicates, and prays to the intention of the Church, applicable also to the souls in purgatory and to himself. This indulgence is *in articulo mortis.* In like manner, form the intention of gaining also all the indulgences granted for saying the Rosary on beads properly blessed, the *Angelus Domini* three times a day, the Litany of our Blessed Lady, the *Salve Regina,* the *Ave Maria,* and the *Gloria Patri;* for saying, "Blessed be the holy and immaculate and most pure conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary;" as also for saying, "Praised now and forever be the Most Holy Sacrament;" for reciting the prayer *Anima Christi,* etc.; for bowing the head at the *Gloria Patri* and at the most holy names of Jesus and Mary; as also for hearing Mass; for making half an hour's mental prayer; to which, besides a partial, there is also a plenary, indulgence attached, provided it be continued for a month, on condition of confession and Communion, and prayers to the intention of the Church in the course of the same; for genuflecting before the Most Holy Sacrament, and for kissing the crucifix. Always have the intention formed of gaining every such indulgence.

Then, that you may be able to keep yourself ever in a state of recollection and union with God, as long as you live, and as far as may be possible, turn everything that you may see or hear into an occasion for raising your mind to God, or for taking a glance at eternity. For example, when you see running water, reflect that your life is also in like manner running on, and carrying you nearer and nearer to death. When you see a lamp going out for want of oil, reflect that thus also one day you will have to bring your life to its end. When you see the graves or remains of the dead, consider that you also have to become like them. When you see the great ones of this world rejoicing in their wealth or distinction,

pity their folly, and say, For me God is sufficient: *Some trust in chariots, some in horses, but we in the name of the Lord.*[1] Let these glory in such vanity; I will make nothing my glory but the grace of God, and the love of him. When you behold the pompous funerals, or the fine sepulchral monuments of the great ones who are dead, say, If these are damned, what is the good of this pomp to them? When you behold the sea in a calm or a storm, consider the difference that there is between a soul when in the grace and when out of the grace of God. When you see a tree that is withered, consider that a soul without God is serviceable for nothing but to be cast into fire. If you ever happen to see one who has been guilty of some great crime, trembling with shame and fright in the presence of his judge, or of his father, or of his bishop, consider what the panic of a sinner will be in the presence of Christ his judge. When it thunders, and you become alarmed, reflect how those miserable ones who are damned tremble as they hear continually in hell the thunders of the divine wrath. If you ever see one who has been condemned to suffer a painful death, and who says, Is there, then, no longer any means for my escaping death? consider what will be the despair of a soul when it is condemned to hell, as it says, Is there, then, no longer any means for escaping from eternal ruin?

When your eye rests on scenes in the country or along the shore, on flowers or fruits, and you are delighted by the sight and scent of all, say, Behold, how many are the beautiful creatures that God has created for me in this world, in order that I may love him; and what further enjoyments does he not keep prepared for me in Paradise? St. Teresa used to say that when she saw any beautiful hills or slopes, they seemed to reproach

[1] "Hi in curribus, et hi in equis; nos autem in nomine Domini."—*Ps.* xix. 8.

her for her own ingratitude to God. And the Abbot de Rancé, founder of La Trappe, said that the beautiful creatures around him reminded him of his own obligation to love God. St. Augustine also said the same, crying out aloud, "Heaven, and earth, and all things tell me to love Thee."[1] It is related of a certain holy man, that in passing through the fields he would strike with a little stick the flowers and plants which he found, saying, "Be silent; do not reproach me any longer for my ingratitude to God. I have understood you; be silent; say no more." When St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi held in her hand any beautiful fruit or flower, she used to feel herself smitten by it with divine love, saying to herself, "Behold, my God has thought from eternity of creating this fruit, this flower, in order to give it me as a token of the love which he bears towards me."

When you see rivers or brooks, reflect that as the water which you behold keeps running on to the ocean without ever stopping, so ought you to be ever hasting on to God, who is your only good. When you happen to be in a vehicle that is drawn by beasts of burden, say, See what labor these innocent animals go through for my service; and how much pains do I myself take in order to serve and please my God? When you see a little dog, which for a miserable morsel of bread is so faithful to its master, reflect how much greater reason you have to be faithful to God, who has created and preserved and provided for you, and heaps upon you so many blessings. When you hear the birds sing, say, Hearken, O my soul, to the praise which these little creatures are giving to their Creator; and what are you doing? Then do you also praise him with acts of love. On the other hand, when you hear the cock crow, recall to your memory that there once was a time when you

[1] "Cœlum et terra, et omnia quæ in eis sunt, mihi dicunt ut amem te."—*Conf.* l. 10, c. 6.

also, like Peter, denied your God; and renew your contrition and your tears. So, likewise, when you see the house or place where you have sinned, turn yourself to God, and say, *The sins of my youth and my ignorance remember not, O Lord.*" [1]

When you behold any valleys, consider that as their fertility is owing to the waters that run down from the mountains, so from heaven do graces descend upon the souls of the humble, and pass by the proud. When you see a beautifully ornamented church, consider the beauty of a soul in a state of grace, which is a real temple of God. When you behold the sea, consider the immensity and the greatness of God. When you see fire, or candles lighted on an altar, say, How many years is it since I ought to have been cast into hell to burn? But since Thou, O Lord, hast not sent me there, make this heart of mine burn with love for Thee, as that wood or those candles burn. When you look up at the sky, all studded with stars, say with St. Andrew of Avellino, "O my feet, you will one day have those stars beneath you."

Then, in order frequently to recall to mind the mysteries of our Saviour's love, when you see hay, a manger, or caves, let the Infant Jesus in the stable of Bethlehem be present to your recollection. When you see a saw, a hammer, a plane, or an axe, remember how Jesus worked like a mere lad, in the shop at Nazareth. Then if you see ropes, thorns, nails, or pieces of wood, reflect on the Passion and Death of our Redeemer. St Francis of Assisi, on seeing a lamb, would begin to weep, saying, "My Lord like a lamb was led to death for me." Again: when you see altars, chalices, or patens, recall to mind the greatness of the love which Jesus Christ has borne us in giving us the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist.

Frequently during the day make an offering of your-

[1] "Delicta juventutis meæ, et ignorantias meas, ne memineris."—*Ps.* xxiv. 7.

self to God, as St. Teresa used to do, saying, "Lord, here am I; do with me that which pleaseth Thee. Declare to me Thy will, that I may do it for Thee; I wish to do it thoroughly." Then repeat, as often as you can, acts of love towards God. St. Teresa used also to say that acts of love are the fuel by which holy love is to be kept on fire within the heart. When the Venerable Sister Seraphine of Carpi was one day considering that the mule belonging to the convent had not the power of loving God, she expressed her compassion for it thus: "Poor brute; thou neither knowest nor canst love thy God;" and the mule commenced to weep so that the tears fell in streams from its eyes: so likewise do you, when beholding any animal which has not the capacity for knowing or loving God, animate yourself, who can love him, to make the more abundant acts of love. Whenever you fall into any fault, humble yourself for it immediately; and, with an act of more fervent love, endeavor to rise again. When anything adverse happens, immediately make an offering to God of what you have to suffer, bringing your will into conformity with his own; and ever accustom yourself under all adverse circumstances to repeat these words: "Thus God wills; thus I will too." Acts of resignation are the acts of love that are most precious and acceptable to the heart of God.

When you have to decide upon anything, or to give any counsel of importance, first commend yourself to God, and then set about your undertaking, or give your opinion. As often as you can during the day, after the example of St. Rose of Lima, repeat the prayer, *Deus in adjutorium meum intende:* "Lord, come to my assistance; do not leave me in my own hands." And for this end frequently turn to the image of the Crucified, or to that of the Most Holy Mary, which is in your room; and do not omit to make frequent invocations of the names of

Jesus and of Mary, especially in time of temptation. Since God is infinite goodness, his desire of communicating his graces to us is perfect. The Venerable Father Alvarez one day saw our Saviour with his hands full of graces, and going about in search of those to whom he might dispense them. But it is his will that we should ask them of him. *Ask, and ye shall receive*,[1] otherwise he will draw back his hand; whereas, on the contrary, he will willingly open it to those who call upon him. And who is there, says the Preacher, that hath called upon him and God despised him by not granting his prayer? *Who hath called upon Him, and He hath despised him?*[2] And David tells us that the Lord shows not merely mercy, but great mercy, to those who call upon him: *For Thou, O Lord, art sweet and mild and plenteous in mercy to all that call upon Thee.*[3]

Oh, how good and bountiful is the Lord to him who seeks him lovingly! *The Lord is good to the soul that seeks Him.*[4] If he lets himself be found even by him who seeks him not—*I was found by them that did not seek Me*[5]—how much more willingly will he let himself be found by one who seeks him,—and seeks him, too, in order to serve him and to love him!

To conclude: St. Teresa says that holy souls in this world have to conform themselves by love to what the souls of the blessed do in heaven. As the saints in heaven occupy themselves only with God, and have no other thought or joy than in his glory and in his love, so also must this be the case with you. While you are

[1] "Petite, et accipietis."—*John*, xvi. 24.

[2] "Quis invocavit eum, et despexit illum?"—*Ecclus.* ii. 12.

[3] "Tu, Domine, suavis et mitis, et multæ misericordiæ, omnibus invocantibus te."—*Ps.* lxxxv. 5.

[4] "Bonus est Dominus . . . animæ quærenti illum."—*Lam.* iii. 25.

[5] "Inventus sum a non quærentibus me."—*Rom.* x. 20.

in this world, let God be your only happiness, the only object of your affections, the only end of all your actions and desires, until you come to that eternal kingdom where your love will be in all things perfected and completed, and your desires will be perfectly fulfilled and satisfied.

HYMN.

Dialogue between Jesus and the Loving Soul.

(Taken from the Canticles.)

THE DIVINE SPOUSE.

Aperi mihi, soror mea (Cant. v. 2).
Open to Me, my sister.

Open to me, my sister,
Open to me thy heart;
My love can bear no longer
To live from thee apart.

To me thou art all coldness,
Yet still for thee I burn;
Ah! see how much I love thee,
And love for love return.

Anima mea liquefacta est, ut dilectus locutus est (v. 6).
My soul melted when my Beloved spoke.

THE SOUL.

As soon as my Beloved
Had made me hear his voice,
Within my breast all melting,
I felt my heart rejoice.

But oh! what tongue could utter
The gladness I had known
Had he but deigned to tarry,
And speak with me alone!

Adjuro vos filiæ Jerusalem, si inveneritis dilectum meum, ut nuntietis ei quia amore langueo (v. 8).
I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my Beloved, that you tell him that I languish with love.

My sisters, I entreat you
If ye perchance have seen
My Love, as ye were wandering
Amid the woodlands green,

Tell him my heart is mourning
In sadness, night and day;
While banished from his presence
I languish far away.

Dilectus meus candidus et rubicundus, electus ex millibus (v. 10).
My Beloved is white and ruddy, chosen out of thousands.

My sisters, do you ask me
Who is that lovely One,
Whose winning charms have conquered
And made my heart his own?

He is that Lord of glory,
Whose sweet and lovely face
Is radiant with the beauty
Of every heavenly grace!

White is my Love, and ruddy,
And all surpassing fair;
Among a thousand chosen
None can with him compare.

Quæsivi, et non inveni illum; vocavi, et non respondit mihi (v. 6).
I sought Him, and found Him not; I called, and He did not answer me.

My Spouse, my well-belovèd,
Ah, tell me where Thou art;
Oh, come, and by Thy presence
Peace to my soul impart.

I seek Thee; dost Thou fly me?
I call; dost Thou not hear?
I weep; dost Thou not pity?
My Spouse, why thus severe?

Fuge, dilecte mi, et assimilare capreæ hinnuloque cervorum super montes aromatum (viii. 14).
Flee away, O my Beloved, and be like to the roe and to the young hart upon the mountains of aromatical spices.

But haste away, Beloved,
If love thus makes Thee flee,
That I may learn to follow,
And grow in love for Thee.

Upon the desert mountains
Hie Thee, my Love, away;
'Tis there I will await Thee,
Alone with Thee to stay.

Trahe me; post te curremus in odorem unguentorum tuorum (i. 3).
Draw me; we will run after Thee to the odor of Thy ointments.

By the enticing odor
Of Thy delights so pure,
O sweetest Lord of Heaven,
To Thee my soul allure.

Then, by Thy love all ravished,
A captive, chained, but free,
My heart with love united
Shall joyful run to Thee.

Ego flos campi, et lilium convallium (ii. 1).
I am the flower of the field, and the lily of the valleys.

THE DIVINE SPOUSE.

To all myself I offer,
Like flow'ret of the field;
To all that seek me truly
My beauty is revealed.

Like lily of the valley,
He only findeth me
Who seeketh in the shadows
Of deep humility.

Hortus conclusus, soror mea, sponsa; emissiones tuæ paradisus (iv. 12, 13).
My sister, my spouse, is a garden enclosed; thy plants are a paradise.

And thou, my spouse, a garden
Most pleasant dost appear,
So fruithful and so lovely,
And to my heart so dear:

For thou art closed to creatures,—
Open to me alone;
I, only I, possess thee,
And thou art all mine own.

As from the heavenly gardens
Thy fruits are sweet to me;
Those acts of love so tender,
Which now I draw from thee.

Averte oculos tuos a me, quia ipsi me avolare fecerunt (vi. 4).
Turn away thy eyes from me; for they have made me flee away.

Ah, turn away thine eyes, love,
Those tender looks restrain;
They pierce like darts, they bind me,
And captive I remain.

Long since thine eyes had made me
My throne in heaven resign,
And come on earth to seek thee
And join my heart to thine.

Veni, columba mea, in foraminibus petræ, ostende mihi faciem tuam; sonet vox tua in auribus meis (ii. 13, 14).
Come, my dove, in the clefts of the rocks; show me thy face; let thy voice sound in my ears.

Come, O my spouse, my dearest,
Come, O my chosen dove!
Within my heart now enter,
Take thy repose of love.

Then turn thy face unto me,
And whisper in my ear,
For thy sweet voice like music
To me was ever dear.

Say to me thou dost love me,
That word will joy impart;
Say thou art happy with me,
And thus console my heart.

Fasciculus myrrhæ dilectus meus mihi: inter ubera mea commorabitur (i. 12).
A bundle of myrrh is my Beloved to me: He shall abide between my breasts.

THE SOUL.

If Thee, my Spouse, I love not,
Who else my heart could woo?
For Thou art all-endearing,
Most lovely, and most true.

So sweet to me Thou seemest
That ever shalt Thou rest
Like to a fragrant bundle
Of myrrh upon my breast.

Qui pascitur inter lilia (ii. 16).
Who feedeth among the lilies.

But Thou who ever feedest
Among the lilies fair,
And 'mid the flowers of virtue
That bloom with lustre rare,

Come to my heart, and with Thee
Come ev'ry flower of spring;
As pledge of Thy affection
Those flowers Thou lovest bring.

Fortis ut mors dilectio (viii. 6).
Love is strong as death.

As sense and feeling languish
At the approach of death,
And earthly goods and pleasures
Fade at his fatal breath;

So Love divine e'er changes
The soul he makes his own,
And then it finds no pleasure
In aught but him alone.

Dura sicut infernus æmulatio; lampades ejus, lampades ignis atque flammarum (viii. 6).
Jealousy is hard as hell; the lamps thereof are fire and flames.

Love is a flame that kindles
Such ardor in the breast
As makes it prompt to labor
And seek no ease nor rest.

Unconquered still, unwearied,
It burns with deep desire
To make all hearts, all creatures,
With love of God on fire.

And as in hell the torment
Of fire insatiate glows,
So in the ardent lover
His love unceasing grows.

En ipse stat post parietem nostrum, respiciens per fenestras, etc. Surge, propera, etc. (ii. 9, 10).

Behold, He standeth behind our wall, looking through the windows, looking through the lattices. Behold, my Beloved speaketh to me: arise, make haste, my Love, my Dove, my beautiful One, and come.

Behold the Spouse stands hidden,
His eyes are fixed on me;
And is my love still burning,
Or cold, he looks to see.

Hark! the Belovèd speaketh:
Arise, my lovely one,
Come to thy throne of glory,
The storm is past and gone.

Inveni quem diligit anima mea: tenui eum, nec dimittam (iii. 4).
I found Him whom my soul loveth; I held Him, and I will not let Him go.

O lot too sweet, too happy!
O bliss! I now have found
My Spouse, my Love, my Treasure,
To whom my heart is bound.

Then ever, O Belovèd!
Mine ever shalt Thou be;
No more, no more, my Treasure,
Shalt Thou depart from me.

Introduxit me in cellam vinariam (ii. 4).
He brought me into the cellar of wine.

Now to the lonely cellar
All full of mystic wine,
The King, my Lover, led me
With tenderness divine.

What is that mystic cellar?
Ah! 'tis this Sacred Heart;
And love, the wine entrancing,
He deigneth to impart,

Surge, aquilo, et veni, auster, perfla hortum meum, et fluant aromata (iv. 16).
Arise, O north wind, and come, O south wind, blow through my garden, and let the aromatical spices thereof flow.

Ye thoughts of worldly pleasures,
Ye wintry winds, depart,
And come no more to trouble
The peace of my poor heart.

Come, with Thy breath inflaming,
Spirit of Love Divine!
Come, fires of love enkindle
Within this breast of mine:

For, when Thy heavenly breathings
Within my garden blow,
With streams of every virtue
My soul shall fragrant flow.

Fulcite me floribus, stipate me malis, quia amore langueo (ii. 5).
Stay me up with flowers; compass me about with apples; because I languish with love.

Come, O ye heavenward longings!
Come, sweetest fruits of love!
Fresh vigor to my spirit
Bring to me from above.

Within my breast is glowing
Such sweet, such loving fire,
That, lo! my soul is fainting,
I languish with desire.

Ego dormio, et cor meum vigilat (v. 2).
I sleep, and my heart watcheth.

I sleep, but, ever watchful,
My heart is loving still
That sovereign Good who only
With joy my heart can fill.

What peaceful sleep, what pleasure,
What calm repose is this?
No voice of earth intruding,
Love reigns in silent bliss.

Indica mihi, quem diligit anima mea, ubi pascas, ubi cubes in meridie (i. 6).
Show me, O Thou whom my soul loveth, where Thou feedest, where Thou liest in the mid-day.

Blest spirits, who in heaven
The sight of God enjoy,
No fear again to lose him
Can e'er your bliss destroy.

Ah, when to me my Treasure
In heaven will you give,
For whom I die of longing,
For whom alone I live?

Tell me where Thou reposest,
And with Thy love divine
Vouchsafe to feed, O Jesus!
This heart so loved by Thine.

O Heaven, in Thy bright palace
The Spouse his beauty shows,
And all unveiled, there only,
Himself on all bestows.

Ne suscitetis, neque evigilare faciatis dilectam (iii. 5).
Stir not up, nor awake my beloved.

THE DIVINE SPOUSE.

Ah, see! My Spouse now slumbers;
My loved one do not wake;
That sleep of love entrancing
Oh, dare not yet to break.

Tranquil she lies, reposing
In peace of love divine;
Her loving heart united
In closest bonds to mine.

Quæ est ista, quæ ascendit per desertum, sicut virgula fumi ex aromatibus myrrhæ et thuris . . . deliciis affluens, innixa super dilectum suum? (iii. 6; viii. 5.)
Who is she that goeth up by the desert, as a pillar of smoke of aromatical spices of myrrh and frankincense . . . flowing with delights, leaning upon her Beloved?

Before my eyes how charming
This soul in beauty shone,
Who lived for me so constant,
Like turtle-dove alone!

Her heart so true was pining
With peaceful keen desire,
While love, her prayer inflaming,
Consumed her in its fire.

Now like a cloud of incense
Ascending to the skies,
The hearts of all consoling,
Her fragrant odors rise.

With what delights o'erflowing
That soul arises blest,
Who sought with love confiding
On me alone to rest!

Vulnerasti cor meum, soror mea, sponsa, in uno oculorum tuorum, et in uno crine colli tui (iv. 9).
Thou hast wounded my heart, my sister, my spouse, with one of thy eyes, and with one hair of thy neck.

My sister, spouse belovèd,
Thy dart has pierced me through;
Now sweetly I invite thee
To love thy Lover true.

This thy desire to please me
Was like a fiery dart;
These thoughts of thine so humble
Have pierced and won my heart.

Veni de Libano, sponsa mea, veni, coronaberis (iv. 8).
Come from Libanus, my spouse,—come, thou shalt be crowned.

Oh, come, and quit forever
The land of misery,
Where they who love most truly
Must suffer most for me.

A coronet of roses
Entwined with lilies chaste,
The crown of faithful spouses,
Shall on thy brow be placed.

Pone me ut signaculum super cor tuum (viii. 6).
Put me as a seal upon thy heart.

Meanwhile, my spouse, if truly
Thou bearest in thy breast
For me that true affection
Thou hast so oft expressed,

Then must thou have my image
Engraven in thy heart
By hand of love so deeply
That never it depart.

And since thou hast beheld me,
No shame nor torments fly;
As spouse I now invite thee
Upon the cross to die.

V. *A SHORT TREATISE ON PRAYER.**

Its Efficacy, and the Conditions Requisite for its Due Performance.

I.

The Necessity of Prayer.

It is blasphemy to say with Luther and Calvin that the fall of Adam has made it impossible for men to keep God's law; and it is also an error, condemned by the Church, to say with Jansenius that some precepts are impossible even to the just, with their present strength, and that God does not give them aid to enable them to fulfil them. Now the Council of Trent has declared that God does not command impossibilities, but admonishes us to do what we can with the assistance of the ordinary grace with which we are always furnished, and then pray to him to give us the further grace requisite to enable us to fulfil that which otherwise is beyond our strength, upon which he gives us the assistance which we require. In the words of the Council, "God does not command impossible things; but, by commanding, he admonishes thee both to do what thou canst, and to pray for that which is beyond thy strength; and he assists thee, so as to make thee able to do it."[1] And

* This short treatise may be regarded as an abridgment of that which bears the title "Great Means of obtaining Salvation," though it was published several years before the latter.—Ed.

[1] "Deus impossibilia non jubet, sed jubendo monet, et facere quod possis, et petere quod non possis; et adjuvat ut possis."—*Sess.* 6, c. 11.

hence many sound theologians [1] teach that God gives, or at least offers, to all men either the grace which immediately enables them actually to fulfil the commandments, or at any rate the remote grace which enables them to pray, and by means of prayer to obtain the proximate grace by which they can actually observe the commandments of God.

Yet, for all this, there can be no doubt that the observance of the law, in the present state of our corrupt nature, is very difficult, and even morally impossible without a special assistance of God, and more abundant than that which man required in the state of innocence. Now, ordinarily speaking, says the celebrated Gennade, God only gives this special assistance to those who pray for it. St. Augustine teaches, that with the exception of the first motions of grace—such as the first call to faith or to penance, which come to us without our concurrence—all other graces, and especially that of perseverance, are only given to those persons who pray for them: [2] "We believe that no one comes to be saved, except by the call of God. That no one works out his own salvation, except by the assistance of God; and that no one merits this assistance, except by prayer." And elsewhere he assumes it as certain, [3] "that God gives us a few things even when we

[1] See Habert (*Theol. Græc. Pat.* l. 2, c. 6, n. 1; c. 15, n. 2 and 3); the latter quotes Gamache, Duval, Isambert, Le Moyne, etc., and asserts that such is the common opinion of the schools, notably that of the Sorbonne. See also Thomassin (*Theol. dogm. tr. de Grat.* c. 8); Duplessis d'Argentré (*Diss. de mult. gen. div. gr.*), Tournely (*Præl. theol. de gr. chr.* q. 7, a. 4, concl. 5).

[2] "Nullum credimus ad salutem, nisi Deo invitante, venire; nullum invitatum salutem suam, nisi Deo auxiliante, operari; nullum, nisi orantem auxilium promereri."—*De Eccl. Dogm.* c. 26.

[3] "Deum constat alia dare etiam non orantibus, sicut initium fidei, alia non nisi orantibus præparasse, sicut usque in finem perseverantiam."—*De Dono pers.* c. 16.

do not pray, such as the beginnings of faith; but that he has provided the rest only for those who pray."

From this theologians, such as Suarez, Habert, Layman, F. Segneri, and others, with Clement of Alexandria, St. Basil, St. Augustine, and St. Chrysostom, conclude that prayer is necessary to adults, if not as an end, yet as a means; that is to say, in the ordinary course of Providence, no Christian can be saved without recommending himself to God, and asking him for the graces necessary for his salvation. St. Chrysostom says that as the soul is necessary for the life of the body, so is prayer necessary for the soul to preserve it in the grace of God.[1] This, too, is the meaning of those words of Jesus Christ: *Men ought always to pray, and not to faint.*[2] Men ought—it is necessary for them always to pray. St. James teaches us the same thing: *You have not because you ask not;*[3] and the same lesson is taught us in that short sentence which our Saviour spoke: *Ask, and it shall be given you.*[4] If, then, says St. Teresa, he who asks obtains, he that does not ask does not obtain. God wishes the salvation of all men: *He willeth all men to be saved;*[5] but he wills that we should ask him for the graces which are necessary for our salvation. Shall we refuse to do such a little thing as this?

Let us conclude this first point by gathering from what we have said, that he who prays is certain to be saved; while he who prays not is certain to be damned. All the saints were saved, and came to be saints by praying; all the accursed souls in hell were lost through neglect of prayer; if they had prayed, it is certain that they would not have been lost. And this will be one

[1] *De or. Deo*, l. 1.

[2] "Oportet *semper* orare."—*Luke*, xviii. 1.

[3] "Non habetis, propter quod non postulatis."—*James*, iv. 2.

[4] "Petite et accipietis."—*John*, xvi. 24.

[5] "Omnes homines vult salvos fieri."—1 *Tim.* ii. 4.

of the greatest occasions of their anguish in hell, the thought that they might have saved themselves so easily; that they had only to beg God to help them, but that now the time is past when this could avail them.

II.

The Efficacy of Prayer.

The Holy Scriptures are full of texts in which God tells us that he hears all our prayers. In one place he says: *He shall cry to Me, and I will hear him.*[1] In another, *Cry to me and I will hear thee.*[2] Again: *Call upon Me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee.*[3] Thou shalt cry, and I will deliver thee from the danger of being damned. Again: *Who hath called upon Him, and He despised Him?*[4] Has it ever occurred that God has turned a deaf ear to the prayers of any one that called upon him? Again: *At the voice of thy cry, as soon as He shall hear, He will answer thee.*[5] He will hear and respond to thy prayer immediately. Again: *As they are yet speaking, I will hear.*[6] Before they have time to finish their petitions, I will answer them. Again: *Blessed be God, who hath not turned away my prayer nor His mercy from me.*[7] Our prayer is always accompanied by God's mercy; hence, St. Augustine remarks upon this text, that when we find ourselves calling on God we ought to feel very happy, because when we are praying we ought

[1] "Clamabit ad me, et ego exaudiam eum."—*Ps.* xc. 15.

[2] "Clama ad me et exaudiam te."—*Jer.* xxxiii. 3.

[3] "Invoca me in die tribulationis, eruam te, et honorificabis me."—*Ps.* xlix. 15.

[4] "Quis invocavit eum, et despexit illum?"—*Ecclus.* ii. 12.

[5] "Ad vocem clamoris tui, statim ut audierit, respondebit tibi."—*Isa.* xxx. 19.

[6] "Adhuc illis loquentibus, ego audiam."—*Isa.* lxv. 24.

[7] "Benedictus Deus, qui non amovit orationem meam et misericordiam suam a me."—*Ps.* lxv. 20.

to feel certain that God is hearing us: "When you see that your prayer is not removed from you, be sure that his mercy is not removed from you either."[1] Again: *You shall ask whatever you will, and it shall be done to you.*[2] Ask what you like; it is enough to ask, and it shall be granted to you.

Hence Theodoret says that prayer is omnipotent: "It is one, but can obtain all things."[3] And St. Bonaventure says that by prayer we obtain every good, and are delivered from every evil: "By it is obtained the enjoyment of every good, and deliverance of every ill."[4] And if, adds St. Bernard, at times God does not give us the grace which we ask, we ought to feel quite convinced that he is giving us in its stead some grace that is more needful to us. O Lord, said David, Thou art full of pity and mercy to all those who pray to Thee: *Thou, O Lord, art sweet, and mild, and plenteous in mercy to all that call upon Thee.*[5] And St. James says, *If any of you want wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all abundantly, and upbraideth not.*[6] To those who pray, God gives with no sparing hand, as do the rich of this world, for their wealth soon comes to an end; but God's riches are infinite, and the more he gives the more he has to give, and therefore he gives abundantly, with unsparing hand, far surpassing aught that we can ask. *And upbraideth not;* does not cast in our teeth the insults we have offered him when we go to ask favors of him.

[1] Cum videris non a te amotam deprecationem tuam, securus esto, quia non est a te amota misericordia ejus.

[2] "Quodcunque volueritis, petetis, et fiet vobis."—*John*, xv. 7.

[3] Oratio, cum sit una, omnia potest.

[4] "Per ipsam impetratur obtentio omnis boni et amotio omnis mali."—*In Luc.* c. 11.

[5] "Tu, Domine, suavis et mitis, et multæ misericordiæ, omnibus invocantibus te."—*Ps.* lxxxv. 5.

[6] "Si quis vestrum indiget sapientia, postulet a Deo, qui dat omnibus affluenter, et non improperat."—*James*, i. 5.

The nature of goodness is to be diffusive; and therefore God, whose very essence is infinite goodness ("his nature is goodness,"[1] says St. Leo), has the greatest possible desire to communicate to us his good things and his own happiness, and is therefore anxious for our good. *The Lord is careful for me,*[2] said David; and this made the royal prophet exclaim, *In whatsoever day I shall call upon Thee, behold I know that Thou art my God.*[3] O Lord, he would say, whenever I call upon Thee, I at once know that Thou art my God; that is, that Thou art the infinite goodness, who desirest us to pray to Thee, to give Thee an opportunity to shower Thy benefits upon us; for as soon as we begin to ask Thee for grace, Thou dost at once give it. One day a miserable leper presented himself to our Saviour, and said to him, *Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean;* and Jesus answered, *I will; be thou made clean,*[4] as though he had said, Ah, my child, dost thou doubt of my willingness to cure thee? dost thou not know that I am thy God, and that my desire is to see all my creatures happy? And for what cause am I come down from heaven to earth, if not to make all men happy? Yes, I will; be thou healed.

Many persons complain that God does not give them the graces which they wish for. But, says St. Bernard, how much reason has God to complain of them that they do not pray, and that by this neglect they close his hand, which he would be so glad to open for their benefit? "Many complain that grace fails them; but much more justly might grace complain that many fail her."[5] No,

[1] Deus cujus natura bonitas.

[2] "Dominus sollicitus est mei."—*Ps.* xxxix. 18.

[3] "In quacumque die invocavero te, ecce cognovi quoniam Deus meus es."—*Ps.* lv. 10.

[4] "Domine, si vis, potes me mundare. Volo; mundare."—*Matt.* viii. 3.

[5] "Omnes nobis causamur deesse gratiam; sed justius forsitan ipsa sibi queritur gratia deesse nonnullos."—*De Div.* s. 17.

do not complain of me, says our Lord, if you have not received from me the graces of which you stood in need; complain of yourselves for not having asked me for them, which is the real reason why you have not received them; pray for them from this day forward, and ye shall be satisfied to the full: *Hitherto ye have not asked anything. Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.*[1]

The monks of old once held a council among themselves to examine which was the most useful exercise to secure eternal salvation, and they concluded that it was to beseech God in prayer, with the words, *Incline unto my aid, O God!*[2] And F. Paul Segneri tells us that when he began the practice of meditation, his chief object was to elicit affections; but that afterwards, when he came to know the great utility and necessity of prayer, he was careful to make it the principal part of his meditation.

III.

The Conditions Requisite for the Due Performance of Prayer.

But how does it come to pass that some persons pray, but yet do not receive? They pray, indeed, but they do not pray as they ought, and this is why they obtain nothing: *You ask and receive not, because you ask amiss.*[3] Many persons seek for grace, but do not observe the proper conditions. Let us see, then, what are the necessary conditions of prayer, in order to make it efficacious to obtain the graces we desire.

[1] "Usque modo non petistis quidquam in nomine meo; petite, et accipietis, ut gaudium vestrum sit plenum."—*John*, xvi. 24.

[2] "Deus in adjutorium meum intende."—*Ps.* lxix. 2.

[3] "Petitis, et non accipitis, eo quod male petatis."—*James*, iv. 3.

1. HUMILITY.

Prayer must be humble: *God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.*[1] Here St. James tells us that God does not listen to the prayers of the proud, but resists them; while, on the other hand, he is always ready to hear the prayers of the humble: *The prayer of the man that humbleth himself shall pierce the clouds, . . . and he will not depart till the Most High behold.*[2] The prayer of an humble soul at once penetrates the heavens and presents itself before the throne of God, and will not depart thence till God regards it and listens to it. However sinful such a soul may be, God can never despise a heart that repents of its sins, and humbles itself: *A contrite and humbled heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.*[3]

2. CONFIDENCE.

Prayer must be confident: *No one hath hoped in the Lord and been confounded.*[4] The Holy Ghost assures us that it never has happened that any one who placed his trust in God has been deceived. He once said to St. Gertrude that a person who prays to him with confidence does him, in a certain way, such violence that he cannot but listen to him and grant all his requests. "Prayer," said St. John Climacus, "is a pious way of forcing God."[5] Prayer does violence to him; but a violence which he loves and delights in. "This violence is pleasing to God."[6] In the "Our Father," which is the prayer which

[1] "Deus superbis resistit, humilibus autem dat gratiam."—*James*, iv. 6.

[2] "Oratio humiliantis se nubes penetrabit . . . et non discedet, donec Altissimus aspiciat."—*Ecclus.* xxxv. 21.

[3] "Cor contritum et humiliatum, Deus, non despicies."—*Ps.* l. 19.

[4] "Nullus speravit in Domino, et confusus est."—*Ecclus.* ii. 11.

[5] "Oratio pie Deo vim infert."—*Scal. spir. gr.* 28.

[6] "Hæc vis Deo grata est."—*Apolog.*

Jesus Christ himself taught us as a means whereby to obtain all the graces necessary for our salvation, how are we made to address God? Not as Lord, not as Judge, but as Father, "our Father," because he wishes us to ask God for grace with the same confidence as a son, when he is hungry or ill, asks his own father for food or medicine. If a son is famished, he has only to tell his father, and he will be immediately fed; if he has been bitten by a venomous serpent, he has only to show the wound, and his father will apply the best remedy that he has. For this cause, our Saviour has told us: *All things whatsoever you ask when you pray, believe that you shall receive, and they shall come unto you.*[1] We have, then, only to pray to God with confidence in order to obtain all that we desire. And how could our Lord have exhorted us so earnestly to pray for grace, unless he had wished to give it? "He would not have exhorted us (says St. Augustine) to ask, unless he had been willing to grant."[2] The woman of Canaan whose daughter was possessed by a devil went to beseech Jesus Christ to deliver her from him, and said, "Have mercy on me, my daughter is grievously vexed by a devil." Jesus answered, *I am not sent except to the sheep of Israel*;[3] my mission is not to you Gentiles, only to the Jews. Yet she did not lose heart, but confidently repeated her prayer: O Lord, Thou canst console me: *Lord help me!*[4] Jesus replied, But the children's bread must not be given to dogs: *It is not good to take the bread of the children, and to give it to dogs.*[5] But, Lord, she replied, even the dogs are allowed the crumbs

[1] "Omnia quæcumque orantes petitis, credite quia accipietis, et evenient vobis."—*Mark*, xi. 24.

[2] "Non nos tantum hortaretur ut peteremus, nisi dare vellet."—*Serm.* 105, *E. B.*

[3] Non sum missus nisi ad oves quæ perierunt domus Israel.

[4] Domine adjuva me.

[5] Non est bonum sumere panem filiorum, et mittere canibus,

of bread which fall from the table: "Even the whelps eat of the crumbs." Upon which our Lord, having proved the great confidence of the woman, praised her for it, and did what she asked: *O woman, great is thy faith; be it done to thee as thou wilt; and her daughter was healed from that hour.*[1]

Thus, confidence is necessary to obtain what we ask of God. But on what, it may be said, are we to found this confidence? On what? on the goodness of God, and on the promise which he made when he said, *Ask, and you shall receive.*[2] "Who," says St. Augustine, "fears to be deceived when the Truth promises?"[3] Who can ever fear that what is promised will not be given to him, when it is God, the sovereign truth, who has promised?

3. PERSEVERANCE.

Prayer should be persevering, otherwise it will not obtain eternal life. The grace of salvation is not a single grace, but is a chain of graces all united with the grace of final perseverance. Now to this chain of graces there must be a corresponding chain of prayers on our part. There is in St. Luke (chap. xi.) a parable of a man who, to rid himself of the importunity of his friend, got out of bed, and gave him the loaves which he wanted. On this St. Augustine says: "Now, if this man, simply to rid himself of the importunity of his friend, would, against his will, give him the bread which he asked for, how much more will the good God give, who exhorts us to ask him?"[4] How much more will God, who has such a desire to make us partakers of his

[1] "O mulier! magna est fides tua: fiat tibi sicut vis. Et sanata est filia ejus ex illa hora."—*Matt.* xv. 28.

[2] Petite et accipietis.

[3] "Quis falli timeat, cum promittit Veritas?"—*Conf.* l. 12, c. 1.

[4] "Quanto magis dabit bonus, qui nos hortatur ut petamus!" *Serm.* 61, *Ed. Ben.*

good things, dispense to us his graces when we ask him for them! Especially as he commands us to beg of him, and is displeased when we do not do so. God then wishes to grant us eternal life, and all the graces necessary for its attainment; but he also wishes us to be persevering in prayer. As Cornelius à Lapide says on this parable, "he wishes us to be persevering in prayer, so as to be even importunate."[1] Men cannot endure importunity; but God not only endures it, but wishes us to be importunate in begging for his grace, and especially for the grace of final perseverance.

It is true that we cannot merit final perseverance, as the Council of Trent has declared;[2] for it is a gift that God gives us quite gratuitously; nevertheless St. Augustine tells us that perseverance may, in a certain way, be merited by prayer: "This gift of God may be merited in the way of begging; that is, it may be obtained by supplication."[3] So that the man who asks for perseverance, though he cannot merit it, will yet, as Suarez says, infallibly obtain it. But, says Bellarmine, "it is not enough to ask for it once, we must ask it daily, in order to obtain it daily."[4] And therefore Jesus Christ says, *Men ought always pray, and not to faint.*[5] We must never cease from prayer; for when we do so, temptation may overcome us: *Watch ye therefore, praying at all times, that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that are to come, and to stand before the Son of Man.*[6] "Be watchful in continual prayer," says Jesus Christ, "that

[1] "Vult nos in oratione esse perseverantes usque ad importunitatem."—*In Luc.* xi. 8.

[2] *Sess.* 6, c. 13.

[3] "Hoc Dei donum suppliciter emereri potest."—*De dono pers.* c. 6.

[4] Quotidie petenda est, ut quotidie obtineatur.

[5] "Oportet semper orare, et non deficere."—*Luke*, xviii. 1.

[6] "Vigilate itaque, omni tempore orantes, ut digni habeamini fugere ista omnia quæ futura sunt, et stare ante Filium hominis."—*Luke*, xxi. 36.

I may not have to drive you from Me when you stand before My judgment-seat." Well, therefore, does St. Paul admonish his disciples: *Pray without ceasing.*[1] Pray, and never cease to pray.

Blessed is the man that heareth Me, and that watcheth daily at My doors.[2] God pronounces him to be blessed who continually watches at the doors of his mercy. And therefore, in the following words of the Gospel, Jesus Christ not only exhorts us, but also commands us, to pray (for prayer is not only a counsel, but a precept): *Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you.*[3] It might seem enough to have said "ask," without adding "seek" and "knock." But no, this repetition is not superfluous; for this was our Saviour's way of teaching us to do like the poor beggars, who, if they do not at once receive the relief they demand and are turned away, still keep on demanding it over and over again, and then begin knocking at the door, and insist on seeing the master of the house, and, indeed, make themselves exceedingly importunate and troublesome. This is how our Lord wishes us to do; to pray, and pray again, and never cease praying him to assist us, to keep his hand over us, and never to permit us to separate ourselves from him by sin. And this we should do, not only when we rise in the morning, but oftentimes during the day: when we hear Mass, when we make our meditation, when we make our thanksgiving after Communion, when we pay our visit to the Blessed Sacrament, when we examine our conscience at night, but, above all, when we are assailed by any temptation, especially if it is a temptation to impurity; the

[1] "Sine intermissione orate."—1 *Thess.* v. 17.

[2] "Beatus homo qui audit me, et qui vigilat ad fores meas quotidie."—*Prov.* viii. 34.

[3] "Petite, et dabitur vobis; quærite, et invenietis; pulsate, et aperietur vobis."—*Luke,* xi. 9.

man who does not in this case have recourse to God, and at least invoke the holy names of Jesus and Mary, will scarcely be able to avoid falling.

IV.

God Hears even the Prayers of Sinners.

But a person might say, I am a sinner, and God does not hear sinners, as we read in St. John's Gospel: *God doth not hear sinners.*[1] I answer, that these words were not spoken by our Lord, but by the man who had been born blind. And the proposition, if taken absolutely, is false; there is only one case in which it is true, as St. Thomas says, and that is when sinners pray as sinners;[2] that is, ask something that they require to assist them in their sin; as, for instance, if a man asked God to help him to take vengeance of his enemy; in such cases God certainly will not hear. But when a man prays and asks for those things that are requisite for his salvation, what matters it whether he is a sinner or not? Suppose he were the greatest criminal in the world, let him only pray, he will surely obtain all that he asks.

The promise is general for all men; every one that seeks obtains: *Every one that asketh receiveth.*[3] "It is not necessary," says St. Thomas, "that the man who prays should merit the grace for which he asks." "By prayer we obtain even those things which we do not deserve."[4] In order to receive, it is enough to pray. The reason is (in the words of the same holy Doctor), "merit is grounded on justice, but the power of prayer (*impetratio*) is grounded on grace."[5] The power of prayer to obtain what we

[1] "Peccatores Deus non audit."—*John*, ix. 31.

[2] "In quantum sunt peccatores."—2, 2, q. 83, a. 16.

[3] "Omnis qui petit, accipit."—*Luke*, xi. 10.

[4] "Etiam ea quæ non meremur, orando impetramus."—1. 2. q. 114, a. 9, ad 1.

[5] "Meritum innititur justitiæ; sed impetratio innititur gratiæ."—2. 2. q. 83, a. 16, ad 2.

ask does not depend on the merit of the person who prays, but on the mercy and faithfulness of God, who has gratuitously, and of his own mere goodness, promised to hear the man who prays to him. When we pray, it is not necessary that we should be friends of God in order to obtain grace; indeed, the act of prayer, as St. Thomas says, makes us his friends: "Prayer itself makes us of the family of God."[1] And that which we cannot obtain through friendship, we may (as St. Chrysostom in a similar way affirms) obtain by prayer: "That which friendship could not accomplish, has been accomplished by prayer."[2] And Jesus Christ, to give us more encouragement to pray, and to assure us of obtaining grace when we pray, has made us that great and special promise: *Amen, amen, I say to you, if you ask the Father anything in My name, He will give it you.*[3] As though he had said, Come, sinners, you have no merits of your own for which My Father should listen to you. But this is what you must do; when you want grace, ask for it in My name, and through My merits, and I promise you ("Amen, amen, I say to you," amounts to a kind of oath) you may depend on it, that whatever you ask, you shall obtain from My Father: *Whatever you shall ask, He will give it you.* Oh, what a sweet consolation for a poor sinner, to know that his sins are no hindrance to his obtaining every grace he asks for, since Jesus Christ has promised that whatever we ask of God, through his merits, he will grant it all!

[1] "Ipsa oratio familiares nos Deo facit."—*Comp. theol.* p. 2, c. 2.

[2] "Quod amicitia non perfecit, perfectum est ab oratione."—*Hom. Non esse desp.*

[3] "Amen, amen dico vobis: si quid petieritis Patrem in nomine meo, dabit vobis."—*John*, xvi. 23.

V.

God has pledged Himself to Grant us not Temporal but Spiritual Goods.

It is, however, necessary to understand that our Lord's promise to hear our prayers does not apply to our petitions for temporal goods, but only to those for spiritual graces necessary, or at any rate useful, for the salvation of the soul; so that we can only expect to obtain the graces which we ask in the name and through the merits of Jesus Christ, as we said just now. "But," as St. Augustine says, "if we ask anything prejudicial to our salvation, it cannot be said to be asked in the name of the Saviour."[1] That which is injurious to salvation cannot be expected from the Saviour; God does not and cannot grant it; and why? because he loves us. A physician who has any regard for a sick man will not permit him to have food which he knows will injure him. And how many people would be prevented from committing the sins which they do commit if they were poor or sick? Many people ask for health or riches, but God does not give them, because he sees they would be an occasion of sin, or at least of growing lukewarm in his service. So when we ask these temporal gifts, we ought always to add this condition, if they are profitable for our souls. And when we see that God does not give them, let us rest assured that he refuses them only because he loves us, and because he sees that the things which we ask would only damage our spiritual well-being.

And often we ask God to deliver us from some troublesome temptation, which would persuade us to forfeit his grace; but God does not deliver us, in order that our soul may be more closely united in love with him. It is

[1] "Non petitur in nomine Salvatoris, quidquid petitur contra rationem salutis."—*In Joan.* tr. 102.

not temptations or bad thoughts that hurt us, and separate us from God, but consent to evil. When the soul, through the assistance of God's grace, resists a temptation, it makes a great advance in the way of perfection. St. Paul tells us that he was very much troubled with temptations to impurity, and that he prayed God thrice to deliver him from them: *A sting of my flesh, an angel of Satan, was given me to buffet me; for which thing I besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from me.*[1] And what did the Lord answer? He told him, It is enough for you to have my grace: *My grace is sufficient for thee.*[2] Thus should we, in the temptations which assault us, pray God to deliver us from them, or at least to help us to resist them. And when we thus pray, we should be quite certain that God is already helping us to resist them: *Thou didst call upon Me in affliction, and I delivered thee. I heard thee in the secret place of tempest.*[3] Often does God leave us in the storm for our greater good; but still he hears us in secret, and gives us his grace to strengthen us to resist and to be resigned.

So, I repeat, all temporal gifts which are not necessary for salvation ought to be asked conditionally; and if we see that God does not give them, we must feel sure that he refuses them for our greater good. But with regard to spiritual graces, we must be certain that God gives them to us when we ask him. St. Teresa says that God loves us more than we love ourselves. And St. Augustine has declared that God has a greater desire to give us his grace than we have to receive it: "He is more willing to bestow his favors upon you, than you are desirous of re-

[1] "Datus est mihi stimulus carnis meæ angelus Satanæ, qui me colaphizet; propter quod ter Dominum rogavi, ut discederet a me."—2 *Cor.* xii. 7–9.

[2] "Sufficit tibi gratia mea."—*Ibid.*

[3] "In tribulatione invocasti me, et liberavi te; exaudivi te in abscondito tempestatis."—*Ps.* lxxx. 8.

ceiving them."[1] And after him, St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi has said that God feels a kind of obligation to the soul that prays, and, as it were, says to it, "Soul, I thank thee that thou askest me for grace." For then the soul gives him an opportunity of doing good to it, and of thus satisfying his desire of giving his grace to all. And how can it ever happen that God will not hear a soul that asks for the things which he most delights to give? When the soul says, "Lord, I ask Thee not for riches, honors, the goods of this world, but I only beg for Thy grace; deliver me from sin, give me a good death, give me Paradise, and meanwhile give me Thy love" (which is the grace that, as St. Francis de Sales says, we ought to pray for above all others), "give me resignation to Thy will" (which is the virtue in which the whole of the love of God consists),—when the soul prays thus, how is it possible that God should refuse to hear it? And what prayers, O my God, wilt Thou ever hear (says St. Augustine), if Thou hearest not those which are made as Thou wishest them to be made: "If Thou hearest not these, what dost thou hear?"[2] And St. Bernard says, that when we ask for spiritual graces of this kind, the desire of obtaining them can only come to us from God himself; so the saint turns to God, and says to him, "Wherefore hast Thou given the desire, unless Thou wert willing to satisfy it?"[3] Since Thou, O Lord, dost put into my heart to ask for these graces, I ought to be certain that Thou art willing to hear my prayer. But above all, the words of Jesus Christ ought to revive our confidence, when we are praying for spiritual graces: *If you, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father from heaven give the Good Spirit to them*

[1] "Plus vult ille dare, quam nos accipere."—*Serm.* 105, *E. B.*

[2] "Quas preces exaudis, si has non exaudis?"—*De Civ. D. l.* 22, c. 8.

[3] Desiderium ad quid dares, nisi velles exaudire?

that ask him?[1] If you, who are full of evil, and of self-love, are unable to refuse your children the good things which they ask, how much more will your heavenly Father, who loves you more than any earthly father can love his family, grant you his spiritual gifts, when you ask him for them?

VI.

Conclusion.

Let us pray, then, and let us always be asking for grace, if we wish to be saved. Let prayer be our most delightful occupation; let prayer be the exercise of our whole life. And when we are asking for particular graces, let us always pray for the grace to continue to pray for the future; because if we leave off praying we shall be lost. There is nothing easier than prayer. What does it cost us to say, Lord, stand by me! Lord, help me! give me Thy love! and the like? What can be easier than this? But if we do not do so, we cannot be saved. Let us pray, then, and let us always shelter ourselves behind the intercession of Mary: "Let us seek for grace, and let us seek it through Mary,"[2] says St. Bernard. And when we recommend ourselves to Mary, let us be sure that she hears us and obtains for us whatever we want. She cannot lack either the power or the will to help us, as the same saint says: "Neither means nor will can be wanting to her."[3] And St. Augustine addresses her: "Remember, O most pious Lady, that it has never been heard that any one who fled to thy protection

[1] "Si ergo vos, cum sitis mali, nostis bona data dare filiis vestris, quanto magis Pater vester de cœlo dabit spiritum bonum petentibus se?"—*Luke* xi. 13.

[2] Quæramus gratiam, et per Mariam quæramus.

[3] "Nec facultas ei deesse poterit, nec voluntas."—*De Assumpt.* s. 1.

was forsaken."[1] Remember that the case has never occurred of a person having recourse to thee, and having been abandoned. Ah, no, says St. Bonaventure, he who invokes Mary, finds salvation; and therefore he calls her "the salvation of those who invoke her." Let us, then, in our prayers always invoke Jesus and Mary; and let us never neglect to pray.

I have done. But before concluding, I cannot help saying how grieved I feel when I see that though the Holy Scriptures and the Fathers so often recommend the practice of prayer, yet so few other religious writers, or confessors, or preachers, ever speak of it; or if they do speak of it, just touch upon it in a cursory way, and leave it. But I, seeing the necessity of prayer, say, that the great lesson which all spiritual books should inculcate on their readers, all preachers on their hearers, and all confessors on their penitents, is this, to pray always; thus they should admonish them to pray; pray, and never give up praying. If you pray, you will be certainly saved; if you do not pray, you will be certainly damned.

A Prayer to obtain Final Perseverance.

Eternal Father, I humbly adore Thee, and thank Thee for having created me, and for having redeemed me through Jesus Christ. I thank Thee most sincerely for having made me a Christian, by giving me the true faith, and by adopting me as Thy son, in the sacrament of baptism. I thank Thee for having, after the numberless sins I had committed, waited for my repentance, and for having pardoned (as I humbly hope) all the offences which I have offered to Thee, and for which I am now sincerely sorry, because they have been displeasing to Thee, who art infinite goodness. I thank Thee for having preserved me from so many relapses, of which I would have been guilty if Thou hadst not pro-

[1] "Memorare, piissima Domina, non esse auditum quemquam, ad tua præsidia confugientem, esse derelictum. O Salus te invocantium!" —*In Cant. post Psalt.*

tected me. But my enemies still continue, and will continue till death, to combat against me, and to endeavor to make me their slave. If Thou dost not constantly guard and succor me with thy aid, I, a miserable creature, shall return to sin, and shall certainly lose Thy grace. I beseech Thee, then, for the love of Jesus Christ, to grant me holy perseverance unto death. Jesus, Thy Son, has promised that Thou wilt grant whatsoever we ask in his name. Through the merits, then, of Jesus Christ, I beg, for myself and for all the just, the grace never again to be separated from Thy love, but to love Thee forever, in time and eternity. Mary, Mother of God, pray to Jesus for me.

HYMN.

Description of the Life of a Soul, the true Spouse of Jesus, from the Words of St. Bernard.

"Servus timet, mercenarius sperat, filius honorat; at ego, quia sponsa sum, amo amare, amo amari, amo amorem.

"Exigit Deus timeri ut Dominus, honorari ut Pater, ut Sponsus amari. —*Serm. 83 ain Ctn.*

The slave fears, the hireling hopes, the son honors; but I, because I am a spouse, love to love, I love to be loved, I love love.

God requires that we fear him as our Lord, that we honor him as our Father, that we love him as our Spouse.

To love is the only true life of a spouse;
For love, love alone, her Belovèd she serves;
One dread, and one only, her fears can arouse,
The dread of not loving him as he deserves.

To forfeit her treasure, the love of her Lord,
Were the greatest misfortune she ever could fear:
She seeks no reward—for to love is reward,
And to love is the hope which her love holds most dear.

But merely to love the dear Spouse of her heart,
To a soul once espoused can never give rest;
So, of all that can serve him, or pleasure impart,
The spouse who is true ever gives him the best.

Each action she does, every good she may seek,
Is to please her dear King and her fealty to prove;
To the heart of a spouse her best love seems but weak;
When she loves him the most, then she longs most to love.

How great is the joy such a Spouse must impart,
When the light of his presence shines clear in her breast!
But when he withdraws, then her desolate heart
Is pining in darkness, and cannot find rest.

She watches her heart, lest some creature should steal
A share of that love which to him is all due;
For she well knows how jealous her Jesus can feel
Of the love of a spouse who has sworn to be true.

Wherever he leads, the spouse follows him still;
He speaks, and the spouse, ever faithful, obeys;
And such is her pleasure in doing his will,
That obedience alone is the joy of her days.

She seeks not for pleasures, no wishes has she,
No will of her own does she take for her guide;
For the will of her Spouse the sole pleasure must be
Of a soul that is chosen by Christ for his bride.

Since to suffer with joy every pain here below
Is the best proof of love while on earth we remain,
The spouse who desires her affection to show
Seeks only and always for suff'ring and pain.

She esteems not their lot whom the worldly call great,
'Tis compassion, not envy, she feels in her breast;
But she envies their happy and glorious fate
Who, united to Jesus, can love him the best.

When she thinks of the spouses departed in peace,
Who yet are detained in the prison of pain,
She labors with joy for their speedy release,
That in heaven with God these dear spouses may reign.

She would that all hearts, who yet dwell here below,
With the love of her Spouse should so ardently burn,
That as much as he merits, so each heart should glow,
Or at least with such love as that heart can return.

And when she sees others offend her Belov'd,
Oh! for them with what fervor she pleads at his feet,
That hearts so rebellious and proud may be moved,
And return to the love of a Saviour so sweet!

Far more does she weep when she sees her own heart
  Unfaithful sometimes to the love of her Lord;
She welcomes his scourges, she dreads not their smart,
  But she weeps for displeasing her Saviour adored.

O worldlings! souls made for a kingdom above!
  From that world which deceives you forever depart;
Be foolish no longer—give Him all your love,
  Who only and ever brings peace to the heart.

No spouse will I own but my Saviour and King:
  Yet it is not the glory I seek, nor the name;
'Tis the faith and the love of a spouse I would bring,
  And that faith and that love my whole life shall proclaim.

And since my sweet Jesus in heaven bestows
  Himself as a Spouse to the spouse of his love,
Here I long but to suffer, I ask not repose;
  I await my repose there, in heaven above.

VI. *INTERIOR TRIALS.*

I.

Rest for Scrupulous Souls in Obedience to their Director.

All the anxiety of scrupulous persons consists in the fear lest, in what they do, they are not acting with scruple merely, but with real doubt as to the act being simple, and are therefore incurring sin. But the chief thing they ought to consider is this: that he who acts in obedience to a learned and pious confessor, acts not only with no doubt, but with the greatest security that can be had upon earth,—on the divine words of Jesus Christ, that he who hears his ministers is as though he heard himself: *He that heareth you heareth Me;*[1] whence St. Bernard says, "Whatever man enjoins in the place of God, provided it be not certainly displeasing to God, is altogether to be received as though enjoined by God."[2]

It is certain that, as to the personal direction of conscience, the confessor is the lawful superior, as St Francis de Sales, with all spiritual instructors, declares, while F. Pinamonti, in his *Spiritual Director*, says: "It is well to make the scrupulous perceive, that submitting their will to the ministers of the Lord provides them the greatest security in all that is not manifestly sin. Let them read the lives of the saints, and they will find that they know no safer road than obedience. The saints plainly trusted more to the voice of their confessor than to the immediate voice of God; and yet the scrupulous would

[1] "Qui vos audit, me audit."—*Luke*, x. 16.

[2] "Quidquid vice Dei præcipit homo, quod non sit tamen certum displicere Deo, haud secus omnino accipiendum est, quam si præcipiat Deus."—*De Præ. et Disp.* c. 12.

lean more on their own judgment than on the Gospel, which assures them, 'He that heareth you heareth Me.'"[1]

The Blessed Henry Suso says, that "God demands no account from us of things done under obedience." St. Philip Neri says the same: "Let such as desire to advance in the way of God submit themselves to a learned confessor, and obey him in God's stead; let him who thus acts assure himself that he will have to render no account to God for his actions."[2] He says, moreover, that one should have all faith in one's confessor, on the ground that God would not permit him to err; and that there is nothing that more surely cuts asunder the snares of the devil than to do the will of another in what is good, nor anything more full of danger than to be guiding ourselves according to what seems best to us; which is confirmed by St. John of the Cross, who says, in the name of the Lord: "When thou art unfaithful to confessors, thou art so unto Me, who have said, He that despiseth you despiseth Me." And again: "Not to rest satisfied with what the confessor says is pride and failure in faith."

We are, therefore, to have this certain confidence, that each person, in obeying his spiritual Father, may be sure of not sinning. "The sovereign remedy for the scrupulous," says St. Bernard, "is a blind obedience to their confessor." John Gerson relates, that the same St. Bernard told one of his disciples, who was scrupulous, to go and celebrate, and take his word for it. He went, and was cured of his scruples. "But a person may answer," says Gerson, "Would to God I had a St. Bernard for my director! but mine is one of indifferent wisdom." And he answers, "Thou dost err, whoever thou art that so speakest; for thou hast not given thyself into the

[1] *Introd.* p. 1, ch. 4.

[2] *Life*, B. i. c. 20, p. 130, *Orat. ed.*

hands of the man because he is well read, etc., but because he is placed over thee; wherefore obey him not as man, but as God."[1] For this reason St. Teresa well said, "Let the soul accept the confessor with a determination to think no more of personal excuses, but to trust in the words of the Lord, 'He that heareth you heareth Me.' The Lord so highly values this submission, that when, in spite of a thousand inward conflicts, and considering the decision to be an absurd one, we execute it nevertheless, cost us what it may, the Lord so assists us,'"[2] etc.; and she goes on to say, that we then comply with his divine will.

Hence St. Francis de Sales, speaking of direction from a spiritual Father in order to walk securely in the way of God, says, "This is the very counsel of all counsels."[3] "Search as much as you will," says the devout Avila, "you will in no way discover the will of God so surely as by the path of that humble obedience which is so much recommended and practised by the devout of former times." Thus, too, Alvarez said, "Even if the spiritual Father should err, the obedient soul is secure from error, because it rests on the judgment of him whom God has given it as a superior." And F. Nieremberg writes to the same effect: "Let the soul obey the confessor; and then, although the thing itself were matter of fault, he does not sin who does it with the intention of obeying him who holds to him the place of God, persuading himself (as is, indeed, the case) that he is bound to obey him;" forasmuch as (according to the words of F. Rogacci and F. Lessius) the confessor is to us the interpreter of the

[1] Quisquis ita dicis, erras; non enim te commisisti in manus hominis, quia litteratus, etc., sed quia tibi est præpositus; quamobrem obedias illi, non ut homini, sed ut Deo."—*Tr. de Præp. ad M. cons.* 3.

[2] *Found.* ch. 4.

[3] *Introd.* p. i, ch. 4.

divine will. And this is confirmed also by the gloss: "But if what is prescribed be of a doubtful kind, the virtue of obedience exempts from sin, although the thing in itself be evil;"[1] and in the chapter *Inquisitioni, de Sent. exc.*, from the same text, obedience to the confessor is enjoined, when it says that scruples "ought to be dismissed at the judgment of one's pastor."[2]

St. Francis de Sales gives three maxims of great consolation to the scrupulous: "1. An obedient soul has never been lost; 2. We ought to rest satisfied with knowing from our spiritual Father that we are going on well, without seeking a personal knowledge of it; 3. The best thing is to walk on blindly through all the darkness and perplexity of this life, under the providence of God."[3] And therefore all the doctors of morals conclude, in general, with St. Antoninus, Navarro, Silvester, etc., that obedience to the confessor is the safest rule for walking well in the ways of God. F. Tirillo and F. La Croix[4] say that this is the common doctrine of the holy Fathers and masters of the spiritual life.

In the second place, the scrupulous should know, not only that they are safe in obeying, but that they are bound to obey, their director, and to despise the scruple, acting with all freedom in the midst of their doubts. This is the teaching of Natalis Alexander: "That scruples ought to be despised when one has the judgment of a prudent, pious, and learned director; and that one ought to act against them is plain from the chapter *Inquisitioni*, etc.,[5] as above; and of Father Wigandt: "He who acts against scruples does not sin; nay, sometimes

[1] In c. *Ad aures, De temp. ordinat.*

[2] Ad pastoris sui consilium.

[3] Maximes.

[4] L. i. n. 434.

[5] Quod autem scrupuli sperni debeant, accedente prudentis, pii, doctique directoris judicio, et contra illos sit agendum.

it is a precept to do so, especially when backed by the judgment of the confessor.[1] So do these authors speak, although they belong to the rigid school; so, too, the doctors in general;[2] and the reason is, that if the scrupulous man lives in his scruples, he is in danger of placing grievous impediments in the way of satisfying his obligations, or, at least, of making any spiritual progress; and, moreover, of going out of his mind, losing his health, and destroying his conscience by despair or by relaxation. Hence St. Antoninus agrees with Gerson in thus reproving the scrupulous, who, through a vain fear, is not obedient in overcoming his scruples: "Beware lest, from overmuch desire to walk securely, thou fall and destroy thyself."[3]

For this reason F. Wigandt also says, that the scrupulous man ought to obey his director in all cases where the precept is not plainly sin,—"unless the director enjoins what is manifestly against God;"[4] and it is the general and undoubted decision among Doctors, that in things doubtful each one is bound to obey him who is placed over him, if it be not evidently a sin. This is proved by St. Bernard in a passage quoted at the commencement; and by St. Ignatius Loyola, who says: "There must be obedience in all things in which no sin is perceived,—that is, in which there is not manifest sin."[5] Also by Blessed Humbert, General of the Friars Preachers, who says: "Unless the precept be plainly evil, it is

[1] "Non peccat qui agit contra scrupulos, immo aliquando est præcepti, præsertim si accedit confessarii judicium."—*Tr.* 2, ex. 2, q. 2.

[2] *Ap. Salm. tr.* 20, c. 7, n. 10.

[3] "Caveas ad extremum ne, dum quæris securitatem, in gravem vuas præsumptionis foveam."—*Ap. Nat. Alex., loc. cit.*

[4] Nisi contra Deum (director) præcipiat aperte.

[5] "Obediendum in omnibus ubi peccatum non cernitur, i. e. (in Declar.), in quibus nullum manifestum est peccatum."—*P.* 6, c. 1, § 1.

to be received as though enjoined by God."[1] Moreover, by Blessed Denis the Carthusian: "In things doubtful as to whether or not they are against the divine precept, one must stand by the precept of him who is set over one; because, although it should be against the precept of God, yet, in virtue of obedience, the person under direction sins not."[2] Of the same opinion is St. Bonaventure.

This makes Gerson say: "The scrupulous are to act against their scruples, and plant their feet firmly in resisting them. We cannot set scruples to rest better than by despising them; and, as a general rule, not without the advice of another, and especially our Superior. Otherwise, either ill-regulated fear or inconsiderate presumption will be our fall." "With a firm foot," says he, "they ought to overcome the scruple."[3] And so the remedy that St. Philip Neri gave the scrupulous was, to make them despise their scruples. It is thus written in his life: "Moreover, besides the general remedy of committing one's self altogether and for everything to the judgment of the confessor, he gave another,—by exhorting his penitents to despise their scruples. Hence he forbade such persons to confess often; and when, in confession, they entered upon their scruples, he used to send them to Communion without hearing them."[4]

So, then, in conclusion, the scrupulous man ought to

[1] "Nisi aperte sit malum quod præcipitur, accipiendum est ac si a Deo præcipiatur."—*De erud. rel.* l. 5, c. 1.

[2] "In dubiis, an sit contra præceptum Dei, standum est præcepto prælati; quia, etsi contra Deum, attamen propter obedientiæ bonum non peccat subditus."—*In* 2 *Sent.* d. 39, q. 3.

[3] "Scrupulosis contra scrupulos agendum est, et fixo operis pede certandum. Scrupulos compescere melius quam per contemptum nequimus, et regulariter non absque alterius, et præsertim superioris, consilio. Alioquin timor immoderatus aut inconsulta præsumptio præcipitat."—*Cons.* 6.

[4] Book 2, ch. 10.

set before himself obedience, and look upon his scrupulous fear as vain, and so act with freedom. Nor does this require (say the Doctors Busembaum,[1] with Sanchez and others) that in each particular act he should expressly determine that the thing is a scruple, and that he ought to obey his confessor in despising it; it is enough that he act against it in virtue of a judgment made beforehand, since, from his past experience, the same judgment resides in his conscience habitually or virtually, though dim and confused. Hence La Croix[2] and Tamburini, together with Vasquez, Val., etc.,[3] add, that if he who is scrupulous be unable amid that darkness to lay aside his scruple at once, or call clearly to mind the obedience laid on him by the confessor,—which some anxious consciences are disabled from doing, perplexed as they are how to put by their scruple, by reason of the fear that weighs upon them,—in that case he does not sin, though he act with a positive fear of sinning; and for this reason that as he has already passed a like judgment upon former scruples, and on the duty of obeying the injunction given him to despise them, he ought assuredly to believe himself to possess it now also, though, from the force of his fear, he does not perceive it. But the scrupulous ought at such a time to despise the fear, inasmuch as it forms no true verdict of conscience. Hear how Gerson openly confirms this point, and what advice he gives: "A formed conscience is, when, after discussion and deliberation, a definite sentence of the reason judges that a thing is to be done or to be avoided; and to act against this is a sin: but fear or scruple of conscience is, when the mind wavers in doubt, not knowing which of two things it is bound to do, and yet would not omit whatever it could ascertain to be agreeable to the divine

[1] *Busemb.* l. 1, tr. 1, c. 3. *Cum Sanc. Bech. Reg. Fill.*

[2] L. 1, n. 557.

[3] *Tambur. in dec.*, l. 1, c. 3, § 8. *Cum Vasq. Val.*, etc.

will; and this fear is as much as possible to be cast away and quenched."[1] In fact, then, Gerson says that a person sins by acting under a practical doubt, when the doubt proceeds from a formed conscience; but that this formed conscience exists when, after examining the circumstances, he deliberately judges with a definitive sentence on what he is obliged and what he is forbidden to do; and he sins by acting against such a conscience as this. But that, when the mind is doubtful and wavering, and yet would not do anything that was displeasing to God,—this, says Gerson, is no true doubtfulness, but a vain fear, which ought as much as possible to be cast away and despised. So that when there certainly exists in the scrupulous person the habitual will not to offend God, it is certain (according to Gerson) that while he acts in his doubtfulness he does not sin; and with reason, since it is then not a true doubt, although he may apprehend it to be a doubt, but a vain fear.

On the other hand, it is certain, that for the commission of a mortal sin there is required a full perception on the part of the reason, and a complete deliberate consent on the part of the will, and to will something which grievously offends God. This doctrine is undoubted, and common to all the theologians,[2] and even to the most rigid,—as Juenin, Habert, and that most rigorous of all, Genet, who speaks thus: "But if (the act) contain only an imperfect degree of deliberation, the sin will be

[1] "Conscientia formata est, quando, post discussionem et deliberationem, ex definitiva sententia rationis judicatur aliquid faciendum aut vitandum; et contra eam facere, est peccatum. Timor vero conscientiæ seu scrupulus est, quando mens inter dubia vacillat, nesciens ad quid potius teneatur; non tamen vellet omittere quidquid sciret esse placitum divinæ voluntati; et iste timor quantum fieri potest, abjiciendus et extinguendus."—*Comp. theolog. tr. de nat. et qual. consc.*

[2] *Salm. tr.* 20. c. 11, n. 5.

venial, not mortal."[1] And this, too, is the teaching of all the rest, with St. Thomas, who says: "That which is mortal may be venial, owing to the act being imperfect, since it does not absolutely amount to the perfection of a moral act, being not deliberate, but sudden."[2]

Let scrupulous souls, then, suffer this cross of theirs with resignation, and not perplex themselves in the greatest distresses which God may send or permit. It is for their profit, to the end that they may be humbler, may guard better against such occasions as are beyond doubt and seriously dangerous, may commend themselves oftener to the Lord, and put a more entire trust in the divine goodness. Meanwhile let them often have recourse to the most holy Virgin Mary, who is called, and is in truth, the Mother of Mercy, and comforter of the afflicted. Let them, indeed, fear to offend God, wherever they do in truth discern what will offend him; but if only they are steadfast in resolving rather to die a thousand times than lose the grace of God, let them, above all things, fear lest they fail in obedience to their directors. On the other hand, while they blindly obey, they may assure themselves of not being abandoned by that Lord who will have all men saved, and who, loving good-will as he does, never suffers a really obedient soul to perish.

No one hath hoped in the Lord, and hath been confounded.[3]
Casting all your care upon Him, for He hath care of you.[4]
The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?[5]

[1] "Quod si aliqua insit deliberatio, sed imperfecta, erit peccatum veniale, non mortale."—*Tr.* 1, c. 9. *De pecc.*

[2] "Potest quod est mortale esse veniale propter imperfectionem actus: quia non perfecte pertingit ad rationem actus moralis, cum non sit deliberatus, sed subitus."—1. 2. q. 88, a. 6.

[3] "Nullus speravit in Domino, et confusus est."—*Ecclus.* ii. 11.

[4] "Omnem sollicitudinem vestram projicientes in eum, quoniam ipsi cura est de vobis."—1 *Peter*, v. 7.

[5] "Dominus illuminatio mea et salus mea; quem timebo?"—*Ps.* xxvi. 1.

In peace in the self-same I will sleep and I will rest; for Thou, O Lord, singularly hast settled me in hope.[1]

In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped; let me never be confounded.[2]

II.

Counsels, from which a Soul, when in Desolation, may Derive Comfort and Confidence.

A Spiritual Conference

BETWEEN THE AUTHOR AND ONE WHO SEEKS HIS ADVICE WHEN SUBJECTED BY GOD TO SPIRITUAL TRIBULATIONS.

Question. Let me hear what these troubles of conscience are, which, as you tell me, keep you in a state of such affliction.

Answer. Father, it is now about three years since I began to suffer such dryness and desolation of spirit as to prevent my finding God either in prayer or before the Sacrament of the Altar, or in my Communions. I seem to be a soul without love, without hope, and without faith,—abandoned, in short, by God. Neither the Passion of Jesus Christ nor the Holy Eucharist any longer affects me; I am become insensible to devotion of every kind. I confess that it is all on account of my sins, for which I deserve nothing short of hell.

Q. You tell me, in short, that you have now been for a long time in a state of aridity. In order to give you an answer adequate to your need, it is necessary that I should know whether this aridity of yours is voluntary or involuntary. Let me explain myself. "It is voluntary aridity" when a person commits voluntary and deliberate faults, and takes no pains to amend. This is

[1] "In pace in idipsum dormiam et requiescam; quoniam tu, Domine, singulariter in spe constituisti me."—*Ps.* iv. 9.

[2] "In te, Domine, speravi; non confundar in æternum."—*Ps.* xxx. 2.

not, properly speaking, to be called aridity, but tepidity, from which if the soul does not exert itself to get free, it will ever be going on from bad to worse; and God grant that, in course of time, it may not fall into more serious disasters: aridity of this kind is a slow fever, which does not cause death immediately, but to a certainty brings it on. Whereas aridity is "involuntary" when a person makes it his study to walk in the way of perfection, keeps on his guard against deliberate faults, frequently prays, and goes to the Sacraments; and, with all this, feels himself dry of spirit. To come to our present case: you have mentioned the sins of your past life; and, I ask, have you not made these sins the subject of confession?

A. Yes, Father; I have not only made a general confession of them, but I have confessed them many times.

Q. And what does your director say?

A. He has forbidden me to make further mention of what belongs to my past life; but I always feel disquieted, continually fearing that I may not have explained myself sufficiently. I am, moreover, tormented by thousands of temptations to unbelief, impurity, and pride. I drive them away; but still am ever in fear lest I may in some way have tacitly consented to them.

Q. And what does your director say with regard to this other head of bad thoughts?

A. He wishes me not to confess them, excepting when I could with certainty make oath, at first sight, that I had consented to them. What do you, Father, tell me? Give me some instruction for my comfort.

Q. What do I tell you? I tell you that you ought more implicitly to trust in obedience to your director. Have you read that instruction of St. Philip Neri, that he who acts in obedience to his confessor may rest assured that he will not have to render an account to God of the things which he does? The saint used to say, be-

sides, that "one should have faith in one's confessor, for God would not leave him in error; and that there is nothing more sure to defeat the designs of the devil than obedience to one's spiritual father as regards what relates to God; whereas, on the contrary, there is nothing more dangerous than the will to be guided by one's own opinion." Have you read what St. Francis de Sales says, when speaking on the subject of obedience to one's director? "Of all counsels this is the chief." "Search as much as you will," says the devout Avila, "and you will never so surely find out the will of God as by the way of this humble obedience, which was so much recommended and practised by all the devout in the early ages." We find the same also in the writings of St. Teresa, who says:[1] "Let the soul choose its confessor with the determination to take no further thought for itself, but to place its trust in the words of the Lord, 'He that heareth you heareth Me.'[2] So great is the value which God sets on this submission, that, even in spite of a thousand conflicts, and though it appears to ourselves that his judgment is wrong, let us, whether it costs us suffering or not, act according to it, and thus fulfil the divine will." St. John of the Cross, too, says (speaking in the name of Jesus Christ): "When you are unfaithful to your confessor, you are so to Me, who have said, 'He that despiseth you despiseth Me.'" And then he adds these words: "Not to rest satisfied with what one's confessor says is pride and want of faith." The saint speaks thus on account of those words of Jesus Christ, which have been quoted above, "He that heareth you heareth Me;" and hence, too, it was that St. Francis de Sales[3] set down these other most useful maxims: "1. One who is truly obedient is never lost. 2. We should rest satisfied with

[1] *Found.* ch. 5.

[2] "Qui vos audit, me audit."—*Luke*, x. 16.

[3] Maximes.

knowing from our spiritual Father that we are going on well, without searching for the reasons on which that judgment of his is formed." (An excellent instruction this for those scrupulous people who wish to find out the reasons for what their spiritual Father enjoins them.) 3. St. Francis adds another excellent maxim, as a consequence of the foregoing, saying, "It is best for us in this life to go on blindly, under divine providence, in a state of darkness and perplexity." This instruction to be obedient to one's spiritual Father in doubts of conscience is, moreover, that which is given by all the Doctors of the Church, and by all the holy Fathers; for all the rest of whom let St. Bernard suffice, saying, as he does, that whatever is imposed by man acting on behalf of God, provided only it be not certainly a sin, should not be regarded otherwise than as the command of God himself: "Whatever precept is given by man when representing God, and is not such as certainly to be displeasing unto him, is to be by no means otherwise received than as the precept of God."[1] In short, obedience to his consecrated ministers is the one safest remedy that Jesus Christ has left us for quieting the doubts of conscience, and we ought to return him the greatest thanks for it; for how could a scrupulous soul, in its doubts, find perfect rest otherwise? This tribulation of scruples—and for those who love God it has far greater torments than all other afflictions of infirmity, persecutions, and the like—is what almost all the saints have had to suffer,—St. Teresa, St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi, St. Frances of Chantal, and many others besides; and how have they obtained tranquillity, excepting by obedience? Now, what have you to say? Are you satisfied that, in obeying your director, you are going on safely?

[1] "Quidquid vice Dei præcipit homo, quod non sit tamen certum displicere Deo, haud secus omnino accipiendum est, quam si præcipiat Deus."—*De Præc. et Disp.* c. 12.

A. Yes, Father, I am persuaded of this; but how does it happen that in a course of obedience persevered in for even two whole years, I experience nothing in the way of devotion?

Q. Now, then, I understand what is your defect, and why it is that, as you say, you do not find peace. Is the will of God the object of your search, or are not consolations and spiritual sweetnesses the things that you are seeking for? If you wish to sanctify yourself, seek only, from this day forth, the will of God, whose will it is that you become a saint, but who will not maintain you in this life in a state of consolation. If you have not consolation itself, console yourself with the hope of having with you him who is the Consoler. Is it of having suffered two years of dryness that you complain? It was forty years of dryness that St. Frances of Chantal suffered. St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi suffered five years of pains and temptations without the smallest alleviation; and, at the end of those five years, she herself prayed to God that he would not grant her, in this world, any more sensible consolations. St. Philip Neri was so much inflamed with divine love, and yet he used to say, "My Jesus, I have never yet loved Thee, and I would wish to love Thee." At another time he would say, "As yet I do not know Thee, O my Jesus! for I am seeking Thee." Again, he would say, "I would wish to love Thee, O my Jesus! and I find not the way. I seek for Thee, and I find Thee not." This is the way in which the saints speak; and why do you alarm yourself so because you are in a state of dryness, and do not find God as you would wish to find him?

A. But these were saints; whereas I know not whether God has yet pardoned the many sins whereby I have offended him, as I cannot be sure of having had a true sorrow for them.

Q. But what is the matter now? Perhaps it is that

you take complacency in the thought of the sins that you have committed?

A. No; I detest them; I hate them more than death.

Q. And why do you fear that God may not have pardoned you? The holy Fathers say that he who hates the sins he has committed is sure of forgiveness from God; and, besides, it is certain, as St. Teresa says, that "he who is resolved to die rather than offend God is, without a doubt, penitent for his past offences against him." Tell me, are you resolved to endure sufferings of every description rather than lose the divine grace?

A. Yes, my Father; by the grace of God, I am resolved to let myself be torn to pieces sooner than commit, with eyes open to it, a single sin, even though it were a venial one.

Q. Well, then, what reason is there why God should hate you? You are afraid lest God hate you. Oh, if you only saw the love which he now bears towards you, you would this very moment drop down dead here where you are standing, out of mere consolation! Do you not know that Jesus Christ is that good Shepherd who has come into the world to give life, and to save every poor sheep of his flock, even though voluntarily lost? And how, then, is it his will to abandon one of those sheep of his who is ready to die sooner than deliberately cause him the least possible displeasure?

A. But who knows whether I may not have consented to some grievous sin, and God may have abandoned me on this account?

Q. No; you are not speaking well. Mortal sin is so horrible a monster that it is impossible for a sin of this kind to be in the soul, without the soul's being aware of it. No sinner who is out of God's grace has any doubts about it, but is certain that he has lost it; and therefore it is an established maxim with all the masters of the spiritual life that when a person who fears God doubts

whether he has not lost the divine grace, it is certain that he has not lost it; for the very reason that no one loses God without knowing it for certain; and thus, whenever you are in doubt about having lost God, be sure that you have not lost him.

A. But why is it that I feel so devoid of confidence?

Q. Listen. You know that true confidence consists not in feeling it, but in willing it. Have you the will to put your trust in God? If you have the will to confide in him, you have already confidence itself.

A. But where is my love for God?

Q. As regards love for God, the same rule holds good which holds with regard to confidence. Love, too, is in the will. Have you the will to love God? If it is your will to love him, understand that you already love him. You would like to have the consolation of feeling the confidence and the love; but God, for your greater good, does not will that you should be consoled by feeling this confidence and this love of yours. Be content, therefore, to possess without feeling it. I tell you the same thing with regard to faith also: it is enough that you have the will to believe whatsoever the Church teaches you, without desiring to feel that you believe. There will come a time when the clouds will clear away, and the light will arise, which will make your consolation twofold. Meanwhile, be content to remain in the dark, and to abandon yourself to the hand of God's divine will and mercy. Let us take the divine Scriptures for our comfort during this interval. In one place God says: *Turn to me, saith the Lord of Hosts, and I will turn to you.*[1] If, then, we wish for God, let us take our leave of creatures; let us turn with love to him, and he will straightway turn with love to us. To all he says: *Come to Me, all you that labor and are burdened and I will refresh*

[1] "Convertimini ad me, ait Dominus exercituum, et convertar ad vos."—*Zach.* i. 3.

you.[1] O ye who are afflicted, come unto Me; and it shall be my care to raise you up. In another passage he says, *Come and accuse me, saith the Lord; if your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made white as snow.*[2] He goes so far as to say, "Come, ye sinners,—come as penitents; and if I do not pardon you, 'accuse Me,'—accuse Me, and treat Me as a liar. But no; howsoever blackened your consciences may be, I will, through My grace, cause them to become white as snow." He goes after sinners as one weeping out of compassion over their ruin, saying, *And why will ye die, O house of Israel?*[3] As though he said, "And why will you involve yourselves in damnation, My children, when you have in Me one who is ready to save you, if you will have recourse to Me?" Now, if he speaks in this way to those who are obstinate, how is it possible that he should drive away a soul that wishes to love him? Tell me honestly, are you attached to any earthly affection, to any person, to anything in the shape of property, to the ambition of excelling, of being preferred before others? Take heed to what is said by St. John of the Cross, that "every attachment, however trifling,—every thread has power to prevent you from winging your way to God, and from being all his own."

A. No; by the grace of God, I think that I have no attachment to anything in this world, so as to be willing to commit for it any deliberate fault; but I see, nevertheless, that I am full of defects. I dislike to be despised; and on such occasions I sometimes show resentment.

Q. And after this resentment, what is it that you do?

[1] "Venite ad me omnes, qui laboratis et onerati estis, et ego reficiam vos."—*Matt.* xi. 28.

[2] "Venite, et arguite me, dicit Dominus; si fuerint peccata vestra ut coccinum, quasi nix dealbabuntur."—*Isa.* i. 18.

[3] "Et quare moriemini, domus Israel?"—*Ezek.* xxxiii. 11.

A. I humble myself, I pray to God to forgive me, and I resolve not to fall into the same error again, trusting in Jesus Christ to give me strength; but notwithstanding this, I remain altogether in a state of fear and disquiet. Then it seems as though it were impossible for me to possess the power of sanctifying myself; nay, the very pretending to it appears to me to be pride.

Q. All is well; persevere in acting thus. It is only not well to remain in a state of disquiet. If you fall, so to say, a hundred times in the day, always do the same, —make an act of contrition, and a resolution, through God's assistance, not to fall again, together with an act of confidence in Jesus Christ; and then remain in peace. You must know, likewise, that it is not pride, even after a fault, for us to hope to sanctify ourselves; rather it would be pride to despond after the fault, and to be troubled, as though the resolutions we had made had secured us against any subsequent fall. Humble yourself then, and have confidence in God. Enough now. I already understand and comprehend the substance of all your fears, which arise from not knowing whether you will obtain your salvation, and whether you are at present in the grace of God. What you have told me is enough; do not propose to me any more doubts and questions about these troubles of yours. I know your conscience already; and I wish to leave with you some reflections, which I hope will give you peace whenever you are troubled. Peace, I say, but not that peace which is free from every shade of fear; for this is the peace which God reserves for us in heaven. But while we are in this world, it is his will that we should ever have a certain degree of fear, that so we may not leave off waiting upon and praying for the divine assistance, and confiding in the divine mercy, otherwise we should often be forgetting to have recourse to God; and there-

fore it is that he permits us to be harassed by fears, in order that we may not give up having recourse to him.

III.

Reasons for having Confidence in the Divine Mercy through the Merits of Jesus Christ.

There are, then, according to what you have told me, two great fears by which, principally, you are distressed, —the first, that salvation may not be yours; the second, that God may not have pardoned your sins.

1. With regard to the former of these,—whether your name is or is not inscribed in the Book of Life,—this is a secret which it is not the will of God that any should know; that so, through the fear of damnation, every one should be diligent by means of good works to secure his salvation. Thus St. Peter writes: *Wherefore, brethren, labor the more, that by good works you may make sure your calling and election.*[1] It is true that our conversion and salvation must be the work of God; but it is requisite for us, too, to strive on our own part to convert ourselves to God, and then he will not fail to save us: *Be converted unto me and you shall be saved.*[2]

It was Calvin's detestable blasphemy which asserted that God creates some people for the express purpose of sending them to hell; and the same infamous heretic went on to say that God himself constrained them to sin, in order that they might be damned; whereas it is certain that it is God's will for all to be saved: *Who will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*[3] And he declares, even with respect to the

[1] "Quapropter, fratres, magis satagite ut, per bona opera, certam vestram vocationem et electionem faciatis."—2 *Peter*, i. 10.

[2] "Convertimini ad me, et salvi eritis."—*Isa.* xlv. 22.

[3] "Omnes homines vult salvos fieri, et ad agnitionem veritatis venire."—1 *Tim.* ii. 4.

wicked, who richly deserve everlasting death, that he would wish them too to be converted and saved: *As I live, saith the Lord, I desire not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live.*[1] It is observed by Tertullian that the words which stand first in this sentence ("As I live") are an oath which is taken by God, in order that we may believe him without hesitation: "Swearing even,—saying, 'As I live,'—desiring to be believed."[2] And hence that most learned writer, Petavius, expresses himself in terms of great astonishment that there should be any one to doubt that truth, that God's will is for all to be saved; and therefore he says that if this Scripture, which God has confirmed by an oath, were ever permitted to be vilified and wrested into any other signification, what will there remain in matters of faith sufficiently clear to be safe against being called in question? "What is there so clearly set forth in decrees of faith as to be henceforth safe from cavils?"[3] And why is it that God has so great a desire to save all mankind? It is because he himself has created them, by reason of the love which he has borne towards them from all eternity. *I have loved thee with an everlasting love,*—this is what the Lord says to every man,—*therefore have I drawn thee, taking pity upon thee.*[4] Moreover, the Lord, knowing our weakness, has patience with sinners, as St. Peter tells us, because he wills not that they should perish, but do penance for their sins, and obtain salvation: *But dealeth patiently for your sake, not willing that any should perish, but that all should return to*

[1] "Vivo ego, dicit Dominus: nolo mortem impii, sed ut convertatur impius a via sua, et vivat."—*Ezek.* xxxiii. 11.

[2] "Jurans etiam 'Vivo' dicens, cupit credi sibi."—*De Pœnit.* c. 4.

[3] "Quid est adeo disertum in fidei decretis, quod a cavillatione tutum esse possit?"—*De Deo,* l. 10, c. 15, n. 5.

[4] "In charitate perpetua dilexi te; ideo attraxi te miserans."—*Jer.* xxxi. 3.

penance.[1] That Redeemer who has ransomed us from eternal death at the price of his own blood, says St. Augustine, does not desire to see those souls of ours lost which have cost him so much: "He who has redeemed us at so great a price does not wish those whom he has purchased to perish."[2] In short, God would wish to save all; and when he sees any who are constraining him by their sins to sentence them to hell, he, as it were, weeps in compassion over them, and says, *And wherefore will ye die, O house of Israel? Return ye and live.*[3] As though he were to say, "But, My children, why will you destroy and damn yourselves in eternity, when I have died upon the cross in order to save you? If you have gone astray from Me, return to Me as penitents, and I will restore to you the life that you have lost."

Now from this you may infer whether it is not God's desire to see you saved; and therefore, from this day forth, never again say, "But who knows whether God wills that I be saved? Who knows whether he does not will that I be damned for the offences which I have given him?" Drive all thoughts like these utterly away, seeing, as you do, that God is assisting you with his grace, and calling you by so many motives to his love.

2. Moreover, as regards your other fear,—that the Lord may not yet have pardoned the sins of your past life,—I have already told you at the outset that, in respect of this, you ought to quiet yourself by the obedience which your confessor has given you, to think no further about confessing what has happened during your past life, after the confessions which you have

[1] "Patienter agit propter vos, nolens aliquos perire, sed omnes ad pœnitentiam reverti."—2 *Peter,* iii. 9.

[2] "Qui nos tanto pretio redemit, non vult perire quos emit."—*Serm.* 22, E. B.

[3] "Et quare moriemini, domus Israel? . . . Revertimini, et vivite." *Ezek.* xviii. 31.

already made. Recollect, as I told you, what St. Teresa says, that one who obeys his confessor, "whether with suffering or without it," may rest assured that he is doing God's will. And I would also put you in mind of what St. John of the Cross says, "That not to rest satisfied with what one's confessor says is a want of faith;" since, in truth, Jesus Christ has said that he who is obedient to his ministers is obedient to himself, and he who despises his ministers despises him: *He that heareth you heareth Me; he that despiseth you despiseth Me.*[1]

And so from this day forth, let us place every thought about our salvation in the hands of our Lord, and leave it there; for he (as St. Peter says) has taken us into his care: *Casting all your care upon Him: for He hath care of you.*[2]

Moreover, in order to keep ourselves in the grace of God, we must have an utter distrust of our own strength; since, without the aid of grace, we could not do anything that is good, and, on the contrary, might fall into all that is evil; and therefore it is that our entire safety lies in recommending ourselves continually unto God, because being, as we are, in continual danger of falling, so we have continual need of procuring, through prayer, the assistance of God. This assistance, says St. Bernard, offers itself to all; and no one remains without it except he who despises it: "It is offered to all; and no one is devoid of it save he who refuses it."[3] The divine aid, then, is offered to all; but it is God's will that he who desires it should ask him for it,—*Ask, and ye shall receive.*[4] And he who is careless about asking for it will

[1] "Qui vos audit, me audit; et qui vos spernit, me spernit."—*Luke*, x. 16.

[2] "Omnem sollicitudinem vestram projicientes in eum, quoniam ipsi cura est de vobis."—1 *Peter*, v. 7.

[3] "Offertur omnibus, et nemo illius est expers, nisi qui renuit."—*In Pur. M. V.* s. 1.

[4] "Petite et accipietis."—*John*, xvi. 24.

remain without it, and will involve himself in destruction. When the devil, then, is frightening us by the thought of our weakness, let us not give ourselves up to despair, but hope to receive the power to resist all his temptations from that God who is omnipotent, and who strengthens us to hope, saying, with the apostle, *I can do all things in Him who strengtheneth me.*[1] And if we place our confidence in God, how shall it be possible for us to be put to confusion? No; it is written in the Book of Ecclesiasticus, *No one hath hoped in the Lord, and been confounded.*[2] The mere name of Jesus is sufficient to vanquish all the powers of hell. St. Paul says that God has given to Jesus Christ a name which is above every name, since it is at that name that everything is made to humble itself: *He hath given Him a name which is above all names; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth.*[3] In contending with the enemies of our salvation, it often avails more to victory to call to our aid the name of Jesus than to say many long prayers.

IV.

Other Special Counsels.

Further, while upon this point, I wish to leave with you for your consolation some other instructions as to particulars, which, I think, may prove to be of great use to your conscience.

1. I repeat my recommendation to you to be obedient to your confessor, because, by what I have been able to ascertain with respect to this obedience, you have not

[1] "Omnia possum in eo qui me confortat."—*Phil.* iv. 13.

[2] "Nullus speravit in Domino, et confusus est."—*Ecclus.* ii. 11.

[3] "Donavit illi nomen quod est super omne nomen, ut in nomine Jesu omne genu flectatur cœlestium, terrestrium, et infernorum."—*Phil.* ii. 9.

had up to this time an entire faith, and therefore have often been disquieted. What I have said to you above on this matter is sufficient. Hold it for certain that one who goes on under obedience is journeying safely to Paradise.

2. Then, when things go contrary, be careful to receive it all as from the hands of God; and especially in times of sickness be scrupulously obedient to your medical adviser, in taking the remedies he prescribes, making known to him without exaggeration all that you are suffering; and then remain in peace. Forbear to ask for acts of compassion from those who come to see you; and whenever any one expresses for you more than a moderate amount of compassion, let your reply be made in the words of Jesus Christ: *The chalice which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?*[1] Say, "God sends me this evil, not because he wishes me evil, but because he wishes well to me; and shall I not accept it with peace?" In time of sickness it is perceived whether a person is spiritual or not. There are some devout people who, when they are in health, are all sweetness and humility; but if they are in any way invalided, they straightway become impatient and proud, complaining of all about them, and especially if they have not, to a moment, the medicine or the attendance which they require. In sickness, then, suffer all without making complaints; and in all circumstances, too, which savor of adversity say, with Job, *As it hath pleased the Lord, so is it done: blessed be the name of the Lord.*[2] Be also careful to endure contempt without resentment; it is by this that one knows whether a person is humble, namely, if he receives contempt patiently.

[1] "Calicem quem dedit mihi Pater, non bibam illum?"—*John*, xviii. 11.

[2] "Sicut Domino placuit, ita factum est; sit nomen Domini benedictum."—*Job*, i. 21.

3. God is all goodness to one who seeks him: *The Lord is good to the soul that seeketh Him*[1] No one has ever put his trust in God, and had to remain abandoned by him: *None hath hoped in the Lord, and been confounded.*[2] God lets himself be found even by those who seek him not, as St. Paul observes: *I was found by them that did not seek Me.*[3] With how much greater ease will he not allow himself to be found by one who does seek him! From this day forth, then, forbear to say that God has abandoned you; the Lord abandons none but the obstinate only, who desire to live in sin; neither does he altogether abandon even these, but is ever going after them up to the time of their death, giving them portions of light for their succor, that so he may not see them lost.

4. When a soul is seeking to love him, he cannot but love it, as he has himself declared: *I love them that love Me.*[4] And whenever he hides himself from these loving souls, he does so for their advantage only, that he may see them yet more desirous of finding his grace, and more closely united with himself. Behold what St. Catharine of Genoa used to say, when suffering aridity to such a degree that it seemed to her as if God had abandoned her, and that nothing remained to her as a ground for hope; it was then that she would say: "How happy I am in this state, so deplorable even as it is! May my heart be broken down to ruins, provided that my Love be glorified! O my dearest Love! if from this unhappy state of mine is produced but a single atom of glory for Thee, I pray that Thou wouldst leave me thus for all eternity!" And saying this, she would burst into a flood of tears in the midst of her desolation.

5. You must know that souls which love the Crucified

[1] "Bonus est Dominus . . . animæ quærenti illum."—*Lam.* iii. 25.
[2] "Nullus speravit in Domino, et confusus est."—*Ecclus.* ii. 11.
[3] "Inventus sum a non quærentibus me."—*Rom.* x. 20.
[4] "Ego diligentes me diligo."—*Prov.* viii. 17.

enter, in time of desolation, into a closer union with God in the interior of their heart. There is nothing which occasions so diligent a search for God as does desolation; neither is there anything that attracts God to the heart so much as desolation, since the acts of conformity to the divine will which are made in desolation are more pure and perfect than others; and hence, the greater the desolation, the greater is the humility, the purer is the resignation, the purer is the confidence, the purer are the prayers, and so the more abundant are the divine graces and assistances.

6. In order to arrive at perfection, attend above all things to the exercise of divine love; the love of God, when he makes our heart his abode, is that which of itself despoils it of every irregular affection; nevertheless, let it be your endeavor to make frequent repetitions of acts of divine love, saying, My God, I love Thee, I love Thee, I love Thee; and I hope to die with these words on my lips, My God, I love Thee. The saints tell us that a soul ought not to make fewer acts of love than of respiration.

7. Moreover, in time of prayer, make an unreserved offering of yourself to God many times over. Say to him in all sincerity: My Jesus, I give myself up to Thee without reserve. I wish to be all Thine own, all Thine own; and if I know not how to give myself up as I ought, do Thou, my Jesus, take me, and make me all Thine own. St. Teresa made an entire offering of herself to God fifty times every day. This is a practice which even you can follow. Therefore make a continual offering to him of your will, in those words of St. Paul: *Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?*[1] This one act was enough to transform St. Paul from a persecutor of the Church into a vessel of election. For this purpose, too, pray to God

[1] "Quid me vis facere?"—*Acts*, ix. 6.

frequently in the words of David: *Teach me to do Thy will.*[1] To this end should be directed all the prayers that you offer to God and to the Mother of God, to your guardian angel, and to all your patron saints, that they would obtain for you the grace perfectly to do the will of God; in short, let this one expression, *Fiat voluntas Tua*, serve you as a remedy for all your evils, and as a means of attaining all that is good.

8. And when you experience more aridity than usual, exercise yourself by delighting in the infinite joy which your God, whom you love, is enjoying, which is an act of love the most perfect that is exercised by the saints in heaven, who rejoice not so much for their own beatitude as for that of God, loving him all the while, as they do, immeasurably beyond themselves.

9. Then, with reference to the subject of prayer, always meditate on the Passion of Jesus Christ. Jesus suffering out of his love for us is the object which most forcibly attracts our hearts. If, while meditating on the mysteries of the Passion, the Lord grants you any feeling of tenderness, receive it with thankfulness; but whenever you do not experience this, you must know that you will always derive from the practice great comfort for your soul. Frequently go, more especially, to the garden of Gethsemani, after the example of St. Teresa, who used to say that she found him there alone; and on considering him when in affliction so great that he falls into an agony, sweats blood, and declares his sorrow to be such as to be enough to cause him to die, you will readily find comfort in any afflictions of your own, seeing that he endures it all out of his love for you. And at that sight of Jesus preparing himself to die for you, do you likewise prepare yourself to die for him; and when you experience in your distresses more affliction

[1] "Doce me facere voluntatem tuam."—*Ps.* cxlii. 10.

than usual, then say what St. Thomas the Apostle said to the other disciples: *Let us also go, that we may die with Him.*[1] Let us die with Jesus. Go likewise to Calvary, where you will find him expiring on the Cross, consumed by suffering; and on seeing him in that condition, it were impossible for you not to rest content willingly to suffer pain of every kind for a God who is dying of sufferings undergone through his love for you. St. Paul protested that he neither knew nor wished to know anything in this life save Jesus crucified: *For I judged not myself to know anything among you but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.*[2] St. Bonaventure says that one who would maintain a continued devotion towards Jesus Christ ought, with the eye of his understanding, to be ever contemplating him dying upon the Cross: "Let him who would preserve devotion within his soul, ever keep the eyes of his heart fixed upon Christ dying upon the Cross." [3] And thus, in all your fears, look at Jesus crucified, and take courage, and brace yourself up to suffer through love for him.

10. Above everything, prayer is that which I recommend to you; when you cannot tell what else to say, it would be enough for you to say, Lord, help me, and help me quickly: *Lord, come to my assistance; make haste, O Lord, to help me.*[4] You are already aware how often the Church repeats this prayer in the office which priests and religious have to recite. And St. Philip Neri made the recital of the same prayer sixty-three times, in the fashion of a rosary, a subject of his instruction. The

[1] "Eamus et nos, ut moriamur cum eo."—*John*, xi. 16.

[2] "Non enim judicavi me scire aliquid inter vos, nisi Jesus Christum, et hunc crucifixum."—1 *Cor.* ii. 2.

[3] "Semper oculis cordis sui Christum in cruce tamquam morientem videat, qui devotionem in se vult conservare inextinguibilem."—*De perf. vit.* c. 6.

[4] "Deus, in adjutorium meum intende; Domine, ad adjuvandum me festina."—*Ps.* lxix. 2.

Lord has promised to grant us whatsoever we ask him for: *Ask, and it shall be given unto you.*[1] St. Bernard went off into an ecstasy while thinking upon those words of Jesus Christ to the two sons of Zebedee, who said to him, *Master, we desire that whatsoever we shall ask, Thou wouldst do it for us;*[2] and the reply of Jesus was: *What would you that I should do for you?*[3] And all the graces which you ask of God, ask for them always in the name of Jesus Christ. Whatsoever we receive from God, we receive it all through the merits of Jesus Christ; and our Redeemer has himself promised us that whatsoever we ask of the Father in his name, the Father will give it us all: *Amen, Amen, I say to you, if you ask the Father anything in My name, He will give it you.*[4] Now, when you are afraid lest it should be God's will to send you to hell, think with yourself whether it be possible for him who says, "Ask of Me what you will, and I will give it you," to have the will to send you to hell.

11. And why, then, when you are in a state of desolation, are you disposed to entertain the suspicion that God hates you? You ought not to grieve, but rather to be consoled, by seeing that God is dealing with you as he deals with the souls of those of his servants who are the most dear to himself. And how has he not dealt with his own Son, of whom it is written in Holy Scripture: *The Lord was pleased to bruise Him in infirmity.*[5] It was his will to behold him consumed and crushed under sufferings and torments.

12. When you are frightened by the thought that it

[1] "Petite, et dabitur vobis."—*Matt.* vii. 7.

[2] "Magister, volumus ut, quodcumque petierimus, facias nobis."—*Mark,* x. 36.

[3] "Quid vultis ut faciam vobis?"—*Ibid.*

[4] "Amen, amen dico vobis, si quid petieritis Patrem in nomine meo, dabit vobis."—*John,* xvi. 23.

[5] "Et Dominus voluit conterere eum in infirmitate."—*Isa.* liii. 10.

may be God's will to abandon you on account of your ingratitude, do that which was done by the two disciples, who, as they were going to Emmaus, were accompanied by Jesus in the guise of a pilgrim; and when they were near the place, Jesus gave signs that it was his will to go further (*He made as though He would go further*[1]), but they, the Gospel tells us, constrained him, saying, *Stay with us because it is towards evening.*[2] And then He was pleased to enter into the house, and to remain with them: *And He went in with them.*[3] And thus, when it seems to you as if it were the Lord's will to leave you, do you constrain him to remain with you, saying to him, My Jesus, stay with me, remain with me; I wish that Thou wouldst not leave me; if Thou dost leave me, to whom shall I have to go for consolation and salvation? *Lord, to whom shall we go?*[4] as was said by St. Peter. And so go on to pray to him lovingly and tenderly; and do not fear but that, to a certainty, he will not leave you. Then say with the apostle: *Neither death, nor life . . . nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*[5] Say to him: My Saviour, show thyself as much displeased with me as Thou wilt; but know that not the fear of death, nor a desire for life, nor any other of this world's creatures, shall ever have power to separate me from my love for Thee. Or, again, say what was said by St. Francis de Sales, when a young man and in a state of aridity, in answer to the devil, who suggested to him that he was destined to go to hell: "And since I shall not be able to

[1] Se finxit longius ire.

[2] Et coegerunt illum, dicentes: Mane nobiscum, quoniam advesperascit.

[3] "Et intravit cum illis."—*Luke*, xxiv. 29.

[4] "Domine, ad quem ibimus?"—*John*, vi. 69.

[5] "Neque mors, neque vita . . . neque creatura alia poterit nos separare a charitate Dei, quæ est in Christo Jesu."—*Rom.* viii. 38.

love my God in eternity, I wish to love him, at least in this life, as much as lies in my power." And so he recovered his cheerfulness.

13. Again: when you feel yourself more than usually oppressed by fears or dryness, do not omit to have recourse to Most Holy Mary, whom God has given us as a consoler for those who are in affliction. Jesus Christ is the foundation of all our hopes; but the Church desires us to call Mary our hope: "Spes nostra, salve." All graces in their origin, come to us from God; but St. Bernard says that they all pass through Mary's hand; and consequently he who does not recommend himself to the Blessed Virgin closes against himself the channel of grace; while, on her part, she does not neglect to give succor to every one who calls upon her to aid him. And therefore it is that all the saints have been careful to recommend themselves continually to this divine Mother, who has all power with God.

14. Moreover, all the time that you have the intention of loving God, keep your heart open: *Open thy mouth, and I will fill it.*[1] The meaning of what is here said by God, "Open thy mouth, and I will fill it, is, that the more we hope for from God, the more we shall receive from him. He has declared that he shows favor towards those who place confidence in him: *He is the protector of all that trust in Him.*[2] And represent to yourself, whenever you feel doubts about the Lord's hearing you, that he is chiding you as he did St. Peter, and saying to you: *O thou of little faith, why didst thou doubt?*[3] Why dost thou doubt My hearing thee, knowing as thou dost the promise which I have made, to grant the requests of every one that prays to Me? And because he is willing to grant us our requests, it is his will that we believe that he cer-

[1] "Dilata os tuum, et implebo illud."—*Ps.* lxxx. 11.

[2] "Protector est omnium sperantium in se."—*Ps.* xvii. 31.

[3] "Modicæ fidei, quare dubitasti?"—*Matt.* xiv. 31.

tainly does grant them whenever we ask him for graces: *All things whatsoever you ask, when ye pray, believe that you shall receive, and they shall come unto you.*[1] Observe the words, *believe that you shall receive;* for they show that we must ask God for graces with a sure, unhesitating confidence that we shall receive them; as St. James also exhorts us: *But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering.*[2] In dealing with this God, who is all goodness, have a great confidence, and rid yourself of everything like sadness. He who serves God and is sad, instead of honoring him, treats him rather with dishonor. St. Bernard tells us that he wrongs God who represents him to himself as cross and severe; being, as he is, goodness and mercy itself. "How can you entertain a doubt," says the saint, "of Jesus pardoning your sins, when he has affixed them to the cross, whereon he died for you, with the very nails by which his own hands were pierced?"

God declares that it is his delight to be with us: *My delights are to be with the children of men.*[3] If, then, it is God's delight to treat with us, it is only just that all our delights should consist in treating with him; and this thought should give us courage to treat with God with every confidence, endeavoring to spend all that remains of life to us with this God of ours, who loves us so much, and with whom we hope to be in company in heaven for all eternity.

Let us, then, treat him with all confidence and love, as our most dear and affectionate friend, who loves us more than any other does. Alas! souls that are scrupulous treat God as a tyrant, from whose subjects reserve and fear only are required; and consequently they are apprehensive that, at every word inconsiderately spoken,

[1] "Omnia quæcumque orantes petitis, credite quia accipietis, et evenient vobis."—*Mark*, xi. 24.

[2] "Postulet autem in fide, nihil hæsitans."—*James*, i. 6.

[3] "Deliciæ meæ, esse cum filiis hominum."—*Prov.* viii. 31.

at every thought which crosses their mind, he may enter into his wrath with them, and be disposed to cast them into destruction in hell. No; God does not take his grace away from us excepting when we consciously and deliberately despise him and turn our backs upon him; and when, by some venial fault, we slightly offend him, he is certainly displeased by it, but does not therefore deprive us of the love which he bears towards us; whence, by an act of contrition or of love, he is at once appeased. His infinite majesty may justly claim all reverence and self-abasement from us; but he is better pleased that the souls which love him should treat him with loving confidence rather than with timid servility. So do not treat God as a tyrant any more. Recall to your mind the graces which he has bestowed upon you, even after the offences and acts of ingratitude which you have committed against him; recollect the loving treatment which he has dealt out towards you, in order to extricate you from the disorders of your past life, and the extraordinary lights which he has given you, by means of which he has so often called you to his holy love; and so treat him from this day forth with great confidence and affection, as being your dearest object. Now, to proceed to another point.

15. It were unnecessary for me here to recommend to you the frequentation of the Sacraments, frequenting them as you do already. Go to confession not less frequently than twice, or at least once, during the week; and with regard to Communion, act in obedience to your director; but even when you feel to be in a state of aridity, do not neglect to ask for it, since it is a rule with directors to allow Communion more or less frequently according to the desire which they perceive in the penitent. When your director sees that you do not ask him for it, nor show a desire for it, he will hardly of his own accord prescribe it; and when you do not make an actual

Communion, at least make a spiritual one, which you are able to do, and make it frequently in the course of the day.

16. Moreover, let the dearest objects of your affection be these two great mysteries,—the Sacrament of the Altar and the Passion of Jesus Christ. If the love of all hearts were to gather itself together into one heart only, this would certainly not be able to correspond, even in the smallest measure, to the love which Jesus Christ has shown us in these two mysteries of the Passion and the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar.

17. Finally, if you love Jesus Christ, do not fail to recommend him every day unfortunate sinners. St. Teresa and St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi always prayed for sinners. If we know how much God is offended by infidels, heretics, and so many others, and we neglect to pray to the Lord for their conversion, this would be a sign that our love for God is very feeble.

V.

Example: St. Lidwine.

Let it, then, be your endeavor, during the remainder of your life, to love and have confidence in him; and do not become sad when you find yourself in afflictions and tribulations; for this is a sign, not of his hatred, but of the love which God bears towards you. And therefore, in reference to this point, and as a conclusion to this little treatise, I will here cite for you the example of the virgin St. Lidwine; and I know not whether there is to be met with among the annals of the saints an instance of any other soul suffering so great affliction and desolation as did this holy virgin.

She was born of poor parents, in a town of Holland called Schiedam. One day, while she was yet a little girl, in walking on the ice, she fell and broke a rib; and

as, in consequence of their poverty, it was not afterwards cured, there was formed upon the broken rib an abscess, which broke of itself, and infected her whole body, so that it became paralyzed. Her parents left her to herself, without taking any care of her, while she continued full of pain, with all the limbs of her body, excepting only her head and left arm, contracted. Her right arm was, consequently, utterly useless; and at the same time she was seized with St. Anthony's fire to such a degree that her very bones were gradually eaten away; and during all this she did not venture even to speak of the evils from which she was suffering, lest her parents might do something to increase them.

She suffered continual and excruciating pains in her head. On her forehead she had a large sore; and in her chin there was a wound extending to the mouth, full of congealed blood, which prevented her from speaking and eating. One of her eyes had retreated inwards and become useless; the other was so full of bad humors that she could not bear the light of the sun, and scarcely even that of a lamp. She suffered so much from toothache that the pain brought her down even to death's door. She had a continual flow of blood from the mouth, nostrils, eyes, or ears. In her throat she had a tumor, which prevented her even from breathing freely; she had to bear the torment of a perpetual fever; she suffered continually from vomiting, throwing up a great quantity of bloody water after taking even the smallest amount of food. She was at one and the same time dropsical, feverish, and consumptive, destitute of everything; and she received assistance from no one. There might sometimes be one who, out of compassion, would hand her some medicine; but that only made her sufferings twofold; and she would take it with all the obedience of a lamb, never making complaints about it. Her parents, being poor, and wearied out by her calamities, which

were so great, used to grumble at her, saying that she was born only to be a torment to them, and to consume whatever little supplies their home might furnish; so that it would be better if death were to take her. She used to weep, not for her own afflictions, but for the inconvenience which she caused to others.

Being unable to move, she was obliged constantly to lie upon her back, which was all in such a state of putrefaction that the skin stuck to the bed,—that is to say, to that poor straw on which she lay abandoned; so that whenever any one, out of compassion, raised her up, her skin would remain adhering to the straw; and her body became, as it were, excoriated. In short, the appearance of that poor maiden of fifteen years of age upon her bed was the same as that of a corpse lying all but breathless upon a bier; and such was the state in which this holy virgin lived for thirty-eight years. It is also related that four soldiers entered her room one day; and, after using much abusive language to her,—calling her a hypocrite and a witch, the truth about whom would in due time be discovered,—they took away from her the poor blanket which covered her half-dead body. Before taking their departure, too, they beat her, and even wounded her with their swords.

There was added to all these external evils an interior desolation,—an affliction from which she suffered for years; since God, for her greater purification, withdrew from her (as is his wont in the case of those souls which are most precious in his sight) his sensible assistance, so that she found herself bereft of her usual loving confidence in God; and then the devil tormented her fiercely, suggesting to her that such great evils as those by which she was oppressed were a sure sign that the Lord had abandoned her, and that she would die in a state of despair. Nevertheless, assailed although she was by so much sickness and by such interior tribulations, she suf-

fered it all with resignation, blessing God for dealing with her so; and in order to appease him, she girt herself with a cincture of horse-hair, which penetrated into her sores.

Such was the state of desolation in which the saint lived for four years; but all her sufferings she bore with resignation to the divine will, ever blessing God for treating her in this manner. All that she had to undergo she united to the Passion of Jesus Christ; and this was the way in which, throughout the whole of that time, she sustained that fearful storm. But then God began to give her great consolation; and however great might be the sufferings which she might experience afterwards, she would nevertheless say: "When I see my Jesus Christ hanging upon the cross, I feel my pains no longer. My sufferings urge me to cry out; but my heart urges me to say, Jesus, my love, increase my pains, but increase my love." To others, when condoling with her, she would say: "All the evil from which I am suffering is a mere nothing, being, as I am, in the hands of a goodness which is infinite, such as my God is, whose bowels of compassion exceed those of one's father or mother."

Take courage, I pray you, from all that you have now heard, and bear your aridity with fortitude; and when you feel more than usually oppressed, offer up the following prayer:

Prayer for a Loving Soul when in Desolation.

O my crucified Jesus! Thou dost already know that, out of love for Thee, I have left all; but after that Thou hast caused me to leave my all, I find that Thou Thyself hast left me too. But what am I saying, O my Love? Have pity upon me; it is not I who speak; it is my weakness that makes me speak thus. For myself, I deserve every kind of suffering, for such great sins as mine have been. Thou hast left me, as I have deserved, and hast withdrawn from me that loving assistance of Thine wherewith Thou hast so often consoled me; nothwithstanding, how-

ever disconsolate and abandoned I may be by Thee, I protest that it is my will ever to love Thee and to bless Thee. Provided that Thou dost not deprive me of the grace of being able to love Thee, deal with me as Thou pleasest. I will say to Thee, in the words of that beloved servant of Thine:

"I love Thee, though I seem
An enemy in Thy sight;
Repel me as Thou wilt,
I will ever follow Thee."

Lord, take not Thyself from me, and then take from me all besides, as may seem good in Thy sight. "Draw me after Thee." My Love, draw me after Thee, and then it matters not though Thou take from me the consolation of being conscious of it; but let it be forcibly that Thou drawest me, dragging me out of the mire of my sins. Help Thy servants, whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy precious Blood. I wish to be all Thine own, cost me what it may; I wish to love Thee with all my strength; but what can I do myself? Thy blood is my hope. O Mary, Mother of God, my refuge! neglect not to pray for me in all my tribulations. First of all in the blood of Jesus Christ, and then in Thy prayers, do I trust for my eternal salvation. "In thee, O Lady, have I hoped, I will say to thee with St. Bonaventure, "I shall not be confounded forever." Obtain for me the grace ever to love my God in this life and in eternity, and I ask for nothing more.

HYMN.

The Loving Soul in Desolation.

O dark and solitary grove,
Whose sombre shades impart
A gloom that makes thee well accord
With my sad lonely heart;

Come, bear me friendly company,
Compassionate my woe,
And suffer thus without restraint
My sobs and tears to flow.

I weep, and ever still must weep,
Nought can my tears restrain,
Until my God, my best beloved,
At length I find again.

Ah! where art Thou, my only good?
Ah! whither hast Thou gone?
Far, far away, thus leaving me
Disconsolate, alone.

Where is that happy time, O God,
That time of joy and grace,
When the loved Spouse consoled my heart
With his sweet heavenly face;

When, in that sweetest sleep of soul,
He aimed the flaming dart,
Inflicting first a wound of love,
Then ravishing my heart;

When, all inflamed with love divine,
My sighs were breaths of fire;
And while I loved, still more and more
To love was my desire.

Alas! how soon the cruel storm
Succeeds that calm so dear!
The very light of heaven above
Now fills my soul with fear.

Horrors I see and feel around,
Where'er I look or go;
And everything inspires with dread,
And adds fresh pain and woe.

Alas! forsaken and alone
Myself I ever see,
And in my bitter agony
No one can comfort me.

Death, death itself with cruel spite
Torments, but does not kill;
The gates are shut, I cannot flee,
I live a captive still.

I fain would flee,—but where to find
A hand to set me free,
If He whose life alone can give
Flies far away from me?

O my Belovèd! help Thou me;
If Thou hast gone, return;
See how I sigh disconsolate,
And for Thy presence yearn.

Ah! be at length appeased with me,
My Life! return again;
And since 'tis Thou hast pierced me thus,
Heal Thou my hidden pain.

Good cause hast Thou, dear Lord, I own,
Forever to depart;
Yet see, ah! see, Thy chains remain
Entwined around my heart.

And should there be, alas! no hope
Of pardon yet for me,
Still know, dear Jesus, I am Thine,
And Thine will ever be.

I love Thee, though I seem to be
But hateful in Thy sight;
And I will ever follow Thee
Where'er Thou turn Thy flight.

VII. *SURE SIGNS BY WHICH WE MAY KNOW WHETHER WE HAVE THE DIVINE LOVE IN US.*

Divine love is compared in the Scriptures to fire.

Our Lord, in declaring to us in the Gospel that he had come on earth to bring down the divine love, expresses himself by saying that he had come on earth to bring fire: *I am come to cast fire on the earth.*[1] And God himself, in the Apocalypse, counsels a soul to provide itself with burnt gold: *I counsel thee, O soul, to buy of Me gold fire-tried;*[2] that is, divine love.

Now, fire has these two properties, it resists what is contrary to itself—I mean to say, that instead of being put out by winds and gusts, it is thereby augmented—and it is operative; if it is fire it will act. Here are therefore, two sure signs by which we may find out if we have ourselves the holy love of God—works and patience.

Do we always work for our God, at least by means of a pure right intention of doing his divine will in all things, of finding his divine good pleasure in all things? Do we voluntarily suffer for his sake everything that is against our inclination,—poverty, tribulations, sickness, and everything else? And instead of such things making us go far from him, do they bring us nearer to him? If they do, then we have the holy love of God. Our love is a fire which acts, which opposes what is contrary to itself, otherwise we have it not; our love towards God will be not true, but false; it will be a love of the lips,

[1] "Ignem veni mittere in terram."—*Luke*, xii. 49.

[2] "Suadeo tibi emere a me aurum ignitum."—*Apoc.* iii. 18.

but not of the heart. St. John also warns us against this: *My little children* (see how he makes use of the very expressions of love), *let us not love in word and in tongue, but in deed and in truth.*[1]

St. Gregory says, "If there is no work, there is no love."[2] And Jesus Christ: *He that hath My commandments and keepeth them* (he who keeps my commandments and observes them faithfully), *he it is that loveth Me.*[3] And St. Augustine adds, "The bitterest and most disagreeable things are rendered comparatively easy, and almost of no account, by love."[4] So that if we always act in the manner laid down above,—that is, for our God,—if we keep his divine commandments, if we observe them faithfully (and with the divine commandments come also those of the holy Church, the obligations of our state, and each one's own duty), if we overcome with generosity and even with cheerfulness, for our God, everything that is contrary to our nature, though it be most distasteful to us, we have in us the holy love of God. Our love is then a fire which acts, which resists what is contrary to itself; otherwise we have it not: our love towards God will certainly not be true, but false; it will be a love of the lips, not a love of the heart: "My little children, let us not love in word nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth."[5]

Let us give some more practical example. Suppose you have an opportunity of making such and such profit, but it is dishonest to do so; or an opportunity occurs for

[1] "Filioli mei: non diligamus verbo neque lingua, sed opere et veritate."—1 *John*, iii. 18.

[2] "Si operari renuit, amor non est."—*Hom.* 30 *in Evang.*

[3] "Qui habet mandata mea, et servat ea, ille est qui diligit me."—*John*, xiv. 21.

[4] "Omnia sæva et immania, prorsus facilia et prope nulla efficit amor."—*Serm.* 70, *E. B.*

[5] Filioli mei, non diligamus verbo neque lingua, sed opere et veritate.

you to indulge yourself in some pleasure, but that pleasure is unlawful; the duties of your state trouble you, or the labors of your employment weary you; and for the sake of your God you do not care to make that profit, you renounce that pleasure, do your duty, and continue your work,—then you have the holy love of God, your love is a fire which operates; otherwise you have it not, your love towards God will not be true love, but false; it will be a love of the lips, and not a love of the heart: "My little children, let us not love in word nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth."

Further, suppose some tribulation comes upon you suddenly, that an action is brought against you unexpectedly, on which all you have depends, that you suddenly lose some person in whom were all your hopes, and who was your whole support. Do you with promptness offer it all to our Lord; do you even bear all with joy? If so, you have the holy love of God. Your love is a fire which resists what is contrary to itself; otherwise you have it not: your love will not be true, it will be false—a love of the lips, not a love of the heart: "My little children, let us not love in word, nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth."

But it is a still surer sign of love to suffer than to act; because in acting, a person employs himself in favor of the person beloved, and so far gives a sign of love; but in suffering, a person has no care for himself, and thinks of nothing but the person beloved, and therefore gives a sign of greater love. And by this mark God was pleased singularly to try the great love of holy Job towards him.

The holy man Job was certainly a great lover of God; but when did he show himself most truly to be so? Was it when he was surrounded by a numerous family? When he was in the enjoyment of an abundance of earthly goods? When he was in perfect health? Yes, even

then; for even then he acknowledged that all came from God; he thanked him for all these things, offered sacrifices, and fulfilled his duty; giving good advice to his sons, and by continually praying for them, that they might never sin and offend their Lord: *Lest, perhaps, my sons have sinned.*[1] But his love of God showed itself really great, when God, on purpose to try his great love for him, despoiled him of all his possessions at once; caused all his sons to die at the same time; deprived him entirely, in one moment, of his health; so that he was reduced to such a state, that, covered with ulcers from head to foot, he sat on a dunghill, and scraped with a potsherd the corrupt matter from all his members; —with all these horrible misfortunes, and in the midst of all these unheard-of afflictions, he did nothing but repeat continually, with invincible and more than wonderful patience, *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; as it hath pleased the Lord, so be it done; blessed be the name of the Lord.*[2]

But why speak of the holy Job? Jesus Christ himself said to his apostles, as he was going to his Passion, *That the world may know that I love the Father*, etc. . . . *Arise, let us go hence.*[3] Here, then, we have the surest and most incontestable proof of the true love of God—patience, patience; the voluntary suffering of anything for him.

The sayings and doings of the saints on this matter are also known to all.

St. Teresa said, "either to suffer or to die;" St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi, "to suffer, and not to die;" St. John of the Cross, "to suffer, and be silent."

The holy martyrs invited their executioners to torment them, and the wild beasts to devour them.

[1] "Ne forte peccaverint filii mei."—*Job*, i. 5.

[2] "Dominus dedit, Dominus abstulit; sicut Domino placuit, ita factum est. Sit nomen Domini benedictum!"—*Job*. i. 21.

[3] "Ut cognoscat mundus quia diligo Patrem. . . . Surgite, eamus." —*John*, xiv. 31.

St. Lidwine willingly suffered a painful illness for thirty-three years.

St. Frances of Rome willingly suffered the unjust banishment of her husband, and the confiscation of all their property; and St. John of the Cross already named willingly endured a cruel imprisonment for nine months, with numberless other inconveniences and hardships.

See, see, the surest and most incontestable mark of the true love of God, patience, patience; suffering, willingly suffering everything for him.

And oh, happy and blessed is he who by these two sure marks of works and patience, of acting and suffering for our great God, discovers in himself the holy love of God!

All the gold in the world, when compared with the smallest degree of the holy love of God, is nothing but a handful of sand: *All gold in comparison of her is as a little sand.*[1] All the riches even of the world, compared with the least degree of the holy love of God, are as nought, as the Wise Man says in the Scripture: *I esteemed riches nothing, in comparison of her.*[2]

But why talk about all the gold or all the riches of the world, while all the greatest of the supernatural gifts are worth nothing without the holy love of God? This is the language of the holy Apostle Paul, who possessed the holy love of God in such abundance, and who therefore so well knew its value.

If, said he, I had the gift of all tongues, and could speak not only in all the languages of men, but also in that wonderful language with which the angels speak to one another: *If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels;* and had not the holy love of God, *and have not charity,* I should be no better than a cymbal that was out

[1] "Omne aurum, in comparatione illius, arena est exigua."—*Wis.* vii. 9.

[2] "Divitias nihil esse duxi in comparatione illius."—*Wis.* vii. 8.

of tune: *I am become as sounding brass or as a tinkling cymbal.*[1]

If I had the highest gift of prophecy, so that I could penetrate the depths of the most abstruse mysteries, "And if I should have prophecy, and should know all mysteries;" if I had the gift of all sciences, and such a great faith that I could remove mountains, from one place to another; "if I should have all knowledge, and all faith, so that I could remove mountains," and had not the holy love of God: "And have not charity;" I am good for nothing: I "am nothing."

This beautiful virtue of charity, or holy love of God, is the queen of all the other virtues, and reigns, and will reign, for all eternity.

After death faith will have its reward, because it will see that in which it has believed; but the virtue of faith will have no place in Paradise.

After death hope will have its reward, because it will possess that which it hoped in; but there will be no virtue of hope in heaven. After death, charity or love towards God will have its reward, and will reign eternally, because with infinite beatitude it will continue to love throughout all eternity that same God whom it loved here on earth.

Therefore, oh, how happy, oh, how blessed is he who, by these two most certain marks of works and patience, voluntarily acting and suffering for his God, is able to recognize in himself the holy and true love of God!

Let us, then, all love our God, and let us all love him in the manner and according to the rule here given. In all our works let us have God before our eyes, in everything fulfilling always his divine will, his divine good

[1] "Si linguis hominum loquar, et angelorum, charitatem autem non habeam; factus sum velut æs sonans, aut cymbalum tinniens."—1 *Cor.* xiii. 1.

pleasure; and let us bear not only patiently but also joyfully all that is contrary to our self-love and to our human sensibilities.

It is for this one only end, that of loving our God, that we have been created and put into this world by him.

To the accomplishment of this one only end let us turn all our care, all our solicitude.

On his love alone let us set any value, let us often ask him to give us his holy love alone: "Thy holy love alone" (let all and each of us say constantly); "give us Thy holy love alone, O Lord, together with Thy holy grace, and I am rich enough; nor will I ask anything else of Thee;" as that great saint who was so filled with the love of God, the great St. Ignatius, continually prayed.

A Short Act of Perfect Love towards God, to be repeated very often.

My God, I love Thee above all things, and in all things, with my whole soul, because Thou art worthy of all love!

HYMN.

The Soul introduced into the Wine-Cellar, and already inebriated with Divine Love.

"He brought me into the cellar of wine, he set in order charity in me."—*Cant.* ii. 4

Oh! where am I? What cell is this
In which I breathe an air of bliss
So heavenly that I burn and pine,
Consumed with flames of love divine?

Who led me to this garden fair,
So rich with flowers of beauty rare,
Whose thousand-scented breaths impart
A perfume sweet which fills the heart?

A sleep unearthly calms my heart;
Vain creatures, wake me not,—depart!
Ah! leave me, leave me, I entreat,
To sleep yet on, in peace so sweet.

A love all-pure embraces me,
And sets my soul's affections free
From earthly things; my heart, so blest,
Now finds in God alone its rest.

I burn, and yet no fire is near;
A captive, yet no chains are here;
No dart, yet I am pierced through;
'Tis past belief, and still 'tis true.

A thousand chains my soul have bound,
A thousand darts my heart have found;
A thousand wounds of love it feels;
The Archer still himself conceals.

Sweet flames of love consume me now,
They death inflict, yet love bestow;
Dying, I live, yet would I not
For lives a thousand change my lot.

Silence and solitude I seek,
And yet of love would ever speak;
I would repose, yet soar above,
And draw with me all hearts to love.

When most alone, 'tis then I see
My best companion is with me;
And to my Love I most am bound
When most detached from all around.

I seek abasement, yet I reign!
Though leaving all, my All I gain;
I shun all pleasures, yet I find
A joy beyond all joys combined.

I burn, and evermore would burn;
I yearn for God, and still would yearn;
I wish to live, I long to die,—
I know not well for what I sigh!

I seek in vain I know not what;
I love, yet comprehend it not;
Scarce only in my love, I seem
To know I love the Good Supreme.

Come, ye enamoured souls, and say
What comfort can your pain allay,
When sick with love, you feel the smart
Of those sweet flames that burn the heart.

But no one hears, not one replies;
And Thou, my Love, these burning sighs,
These bitter tears which Thou dost see,
But make Thee yet more deaf to me.

Come, Love! for I am now Thy prey;
Who art Thou? and what will Thou?—say!

Let me but see Thy beauty nigh,
Then, if Thou wilt, then let me die.

Ah! let me speak, great God above!
Thou knowest all, save how to love;
For Thou art pitiless to me,
A heart that loves and pleases Thee.

If, then, so great Thy love has been,
Why pierce my heart with dart so keen,
And leave me thus in bitter pain,
Apart from Thee to pine in vain?

Ah! cruel, cruel One!—but no,
Belovèd!—yes, I call Thee so;
Thou know'st my one, one only thought
Is but to please Thee as I ought.

'Tis love thus leads my tongue astray;
Senseless, I know not what I say:
That piercing dart of charity
Makes me thus mad through love of Thee.

Dear object of my love alone,
Thou one, one only love I own;
My God! my All! O Loveliness!
My Good, my Life, my Happiness!

My Treasure! ah! what can I do,
Thy sweet and noble heart to woo?
Oh, speak, and tell me how I may
Thy love with my poor love repay.

'Twere little in love's fiercest fire
For Thee to languish of desire;
Nor pain nor death could pay the debt;
To be consumed were little yet.

And now, since words can say no more,
Accept, Belovèd, I implore,
This unreserved gift from me,—
All, all I am I give to Thee.

VIII. *RULE OF LIFE.* (*Abridged.**)

I.

On rising in the morning make the following acts:

1. "O my God! I adore Thee. I love Thee with my whole heart, and thank Thee for all Thy benefits, particularly for having preserved me this night."

2. "I offer to Thee all that I shall do or suffer throughout the day, in union with the actions and sufferings of Jesus and Mary, intending to gain all the indulgences in my power."

3. "I purpose, O Lord! to avoid this day every offence against Thee; but do Thou extend Thy protecting hand over me, that I may not betray Thee. Most Holy Mary, take me under thy protection. My angel guardian and patron saints, assist me."

Then say one *Our Father*, one *Hail Mary*, and the *Creed*, with the *Hail Mary* three times in honor of the purity of the Blessed Virgin.

II.

Take care to make half an hour's meditation as soon as possible in the day. For though meditation is not absolutely necessary, it is morally necessary, in order to obtain the grace of perseverance. Those who neglect it will find it very difficult to persevere in the grace of God. The reasons for this are twofold: the first is, because the eternal truths cannot be seen by the eyes of the flesh, but by the eye of the understanding, which is reflection. Hence he does not perceive them who does not meditate; and for want of perceiving them he will hardly

* This abridgment of a *Rule of Life* was made by the holy author himself.—Ed.

arrive at a due appreciation of the importance of salvation, of the means which secure it, and of the obstacles which hinder it; so that his salvation will be placed in imminent risk. The second reason is, because the soul that does not practise meditation will also be backward to practise prayer. Now, prayer is necessary, not merely as a precept, but as a means to observe the commandments, since, as a general rule, and speaking of adults, God only gives his grace to those who ask for it. But without meditation a person has a very faint notion of his own spiritual wants, and he is moreover but slightly impressed with the necessity of praying, in order to overcome temptations and to save his soul: thus he is led to pray but little or nothing, and for want of prayer is eventually lost. The eminent Bishop Palafox said, "How will the Lord give us perseverance, unless we ask him for it? And how shall we ask him for it without prayer?" On the other hand, St. Teresa declares that it is hardly possible for a man that prays to remain long in sin; he will either forsake prayer or forsake sin: prayer and sin are incompatible.

With regard to practice, meditation has three parts: preparation, consideration, and conclusion. In the preparation must be made three acts: 1, Of the presence of God; 2, Of humility; 3, Of petition for light. We say, 1, "My God, I believe Thou art here present, and I adore Thee;" 2, "I deserve at this moment to be burning in hell. O my God, I am sorry for having offended Thee!" 3, "Eternal Father, for the love of Jesus and Mary, grant me light in this meditation, that I may profit by it." Then say a *Hail Mary* to the divine Mother, and a *Glory be to the Father*, etc., in honor of our angel guardian. Then read the point of meditation, and be sure to meditate, at least occasionally, on the Passion of Jesus Christ. It must also be understood that the fruit of prayer does not so much consist in meditating, but rather—1, In pro-

ducing affections—for instance, of humility, confidence, love, sorrow, offering, resignation, and the like; 2, In making petitions, and especially imploring God to grant us perseverance and his holy love; 3, In making the resolution to avoid some particular sin, and of practising some particular virtue.

Finally, the conclusion is made thus: "I thank Thee, O God, for the lights thou hast given me;" 2, "I purpose to keep the resolutions I have made;" 3, "and I beg Thy grace to fulfil them." Nor must we ever forget to recommend to God the holy souls in purgatory, and all poor sinners. We must never omit our accustomed meditation, whatever coldness and weariness we may feel over it; for St. Teresa says, "To do so would be to cast ourselves into hell with our own hands." Moreover, let all bear in mind that Benedict XIV. granted a plenary indulgence to every one who makes a meditation of half an hour, or at least a quarter of an hour, every day for a month, with confession, Communion, and prayers to the intention of the Church, and partial indulgences are also granted every day to those who meditate. This indulgence is applicable to the souls in purgatory.

III.

Do not omit to hear Mass daily. But what is of the greatest importance is that those who hear Mass should make a special application to their own souls of the merits of the Passion of Jesus Christ. Mass should be heard for the same ends for which it was instituted; namely, 1, To honor Almighty God; 2, To thank him for his benefits; 3, To make atonement for the punishment due to our sins; 4, To obtain divine grace. So that we ought then to pray as follows: "Eternal Father, in this Mass I offer Thee Jesus Christ, with all the merits of his Passion: 1, To honor Thy Majesty; 2, To thank Thee for

all Thy benefits towards me; 3, In satisfaction for my sins, and for those of all the living, and of those who died in Thy grace; 4, To obtain all the graces necessary for salvation." At the elevation of the Host, we may say, "By the blood of Jesus Christ, grant me to love Thee in this life and in the next." When the priest communicates, make the spiritual Communion thus: "My Jesus, I love Thee, and I long for Thee in my soul; I embrace Thee, and wish nevermore to be separated from Thee."

IV.

In addition to this, read some spiritual book for half an hour, or at least a quarter; and it will be best to make use of the lives of the saints.

V.

Moreover, do not fail to pay every day a visit to the Most Holy Sacrament, when you should make at least the following acts: 1, "O Lord, I thank Thee for Thy love in leaving Thyself to me in this holy Sacrament;" 2, "With my whole heart I love Thee, O God! above all other good; and because I love Thee I am sorry for all my offences against Thee, whether great or small;" 3, "I beseech Thee to grant me perseverance in Thy grace and Thy holy love." At the same time make a visit to our Blessed Lady, before one of her images, and beg of her also the same graces of perseverance and the love of God.

VI.

In the evening make the examination of conscience, and then add the Christian acts.

VII.

Frequent the holy sacraments of confession and Communion at least once a week, and oftener if possible.

With regard to confession, say beforehand: "I thank Thee O my God! for having waited for me until now! I hope, through the merits of Jesus Christ, for the pardon of all my offences against Thee! I am sorry for them, and repent of them with my whole heart, because by them I have lost heaven and have deserved hell; but, above all, I am grieved to my inmost soul, and hate and detest my sins more than all evils, because they have offended Thy infinite goodness. I purpose in future rather to die than offend Thee any more."

After confession, thank Almighty God for the pardon which you hope to have received, and renew your good resolution never more to offend him, and to avoid all occasions of sin; and pray to Jesus and Mary for perseverance.

As to the Holy Communion, we must know that it is the grand medicine, as the Council of Trent terms it, which purifies us from our daily venial faults, and preserves us from mortal ones. He who communicates most frequently will be freest from sin, and will make farthest progress in divine love; only let him communicate with a good desire. But, in order to derive more abundant fruits from Communion, he should manage to spend half an hour after receiving in producing devout acts, or at least in praying out of some spiritual book; however, let no one make this more frequent Communion without the counsel of his spiritual director, and on this account.

VIII.

It is well to make choice of a good confessor, and to follow his direction in all spiritual matters, and even in temporal matters of importance; nor should he be left without a good reason. St. Philip Neri spoke thus: "Let those who are desirous of advancing in the way of God put themselves under an enlightened confessor; and let them obey him, as occupying the place of God. Who-

ever does this may feel assured that he will never have to render an account to God of what he does." And this is only comformable to the words of Jesus Christ, that whosoever hears his ministers hears himself: *He that heareth you heareth Me.*[1] A general confession should be made, if it has not hitherto been made, for it is a most excellent means of, bringing one's life into good order; and it is advisable to make it to the director himself, that he may be the better able to guide us.

IX.

Avoid idleness, dissipated companions, immodest conversations, and, more than all, evil occasions, especially where there is danger of incontinency; and for this reason one cannot be too cautious in keeping one's eyes from dwelling on any dangerous objects. For a person that does not avoid the voluntary occasions of sin, especially those which have frequently proved fatal to his innocence, it is morally impossible to persevere in the grace of God: *He that loves the danger shall perish in it.*[2]

X.

In temptations trust not to yourself, nor to all the good resolutions and promises which you have made, but rely solely on the divine assistance; and for this reason have immediate recourse to God and the Blessed Virgin. Especially in temptations against purity, the greatest care must be taken not to remain to dispute with the temptation. In such moments some are accustomed to set their will to make acts of the contrary virtue; but they run considerable risk. The best plan to adopt on these occasions is to renew the firm purpose rather to die than to offend God, and forthwith to make the sign of the cross without remonstrance, and to call on God and the divine Mother, making frequent invocations of

[1] "Qui vos audit, me audit."—*Luke*, x. 16.

[2] "Qui amat periculum, in illo peribit."—*Ecclus.* iii. 27.

the most holy names of Jesus and Mary, which have a wonderful efficacy against filthy suggestions, and should therefore be invoked continually till the temptations are over. Of ourselves we have not strength to overcome the attacks of the flesh, our most cruel enemy; but God readily supplies the strength to all who ask him; but he that fails to do so, almost invariably falls a prey to the enemy. The same is to be observed in combating temptations against faith, protesting at such times, without remaining in dispute, that we are ready to die for the holy faith; and instead of then eliciting acts of faith, it is better to elicit other acts, as of love, contrition, and hope.

XI.

If you commit a venial fault, make an act of the love of God and of contrition, purpose of amendment, and forthwith resume your wonted tranquillity. To remain troubled after a fault is the greatest fault that a person can commit, for a troubled soul is incapable of doing the least good. If, by mischance, the fault has been grievous, then immediately make an act of contrition (which is sufficient to recover the divine grace), resolve never to be guilty of the same again, and take the first opportunity of going to confession.

XII.

Endeavor to hear all the sermons in your power. And it would be most advisable to make a spiritual retreat once a year in some religious house; or if that be impracticable, at least in your own house, by applying yourself for eight days to prayer and spiritual reading. During this time all company and conversation on secular matters should be avoided. In like manner make a retreat of one day every month, with confession and Communion. If your state of life allow it, become a member of some confraternity in which the Sacraments are frequented, and there make your eternal salvation the grand

and sole aim. Whoever enters a confraternity for the sake of managing, directing, or out of party spirit, will derive more harm than good from it. If a person would really profit by it, he must enter it solely with a view to his spiritual interests.

XIII.

In all the vicissitudes of life, such as illnesses, losses, and persecutions, be ever mindful to bow with resignation to the will of God, and repose on these words: "God wills it so, and so I will it likewise." Or thus: "God will have it so; so be it done." He that behaves in this manner stores up immense rewards for heaven, and always lives in peace. On the contrary, he that refuses to bow to the will of God only redoubles his afflictions; for he must endure them whether he will or not; and, moreover, by his impatience he lays up for himself an additional punishment.

XIV.

Be especially careful to preserve a tender and marked devotion to most holy Mary, by performing daily in her honor some exercise of piety. Never omit—the first thing in the morning and the last at night—to say three times the *Hail Mary* in honor of her purity, imploring her to keep you from all sin. Read every day something, be it only a few lines, on the Blessed Virgin. Say her Litanies, and the Rosary, meditating on the mysteries. When you leave or enter the house, ask her blessing with a *Hail Mary;* and on passing by any of her images, salute her in the same way. When the clock strikes, say the *Hail Mary;* and then, "Jesus and Mary, I love you! Do not permit me to offend you." With the advice of your confessor, fast on Saturdays, on the vigils of the seven festivals of our Blessed Lady, and make the novenas for the said feasts, as also for Christmas, Pentecost, and for the feast of your patron saint.

Prayer to Jesus Christ, to obtain his Holy Love.

My crucified Love, my dear Jesus! I believe in Thee, and confess Thee to be the true Son of God and my Saviour. I adore Thee from the abyss of my own nothingness, and I thank Thee for the death Thou didst suffer for me, that I might obtain the life of divine grace. My beloved Redeemer, to Thee I owe all my salvation. Through Thee I have hitherto escaped hell; through Thee have I received the pardon of my sins. But I am so ungrateful, that, instead of loving Thee, I have repeated my offences against Thee. I deserve to be condemned, so as not to be able to love Thee any more: but no, my Jesus, punish me in any other way, but not in this. If I have not loved Thee in time past, I love Thee now; and I desire nothing but to love Thee with all my heart. But without Thy help I can do nothing. Since Thou dost command me to love Thee, give me also the strength to fulfil this Thy sweet and loving precept. Thou hast promised to grant all that we ask of Thee: *You shall ask whatever you will and it shall be done unto you.* Confiding, then, in this promise, my dear Jesus, I ask, first of all, pardon of all my sins; and I repent, above all things, because I have offended Thee, O Infinite Goodness! I ask for holy perseverance in Thy grace till my death. But, above all, I ask for the gift of Thy holy love. Ah, my Jesus, my Hope, my Love, my All, inflame me with that love which Thou didst come on earth to enkindle! "Tui amoris me ignem accende." For this end, make me always live in conformity with Thy holy will. Enlighten me, that I may understand more and more how worthy Thou art of our love, and that I may know the immense love Thou hast borne me, especially in giving Thy life for me. Grant, then, that I may love Thee with all my heart, and may love Thee always, and never cease to beg of Thee the grace to love Thee in this life; that, living always and dying in Thy love, I may come one day to love Thee with all my strength in heaven, never to leave off loving Thee for all eternity.

O Mother of beautiful love, my advocate and refuge, Mary, who art of all creatures the most beautiful, the most loving, and the most beloved of God, and whose only desire it is to see him loved! ah, by the love thou bearest to Jesus Christ, pray for me, and obtain for me the grace to love him always, and with all my heart! This I ask and hope for from thee. Amen.

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